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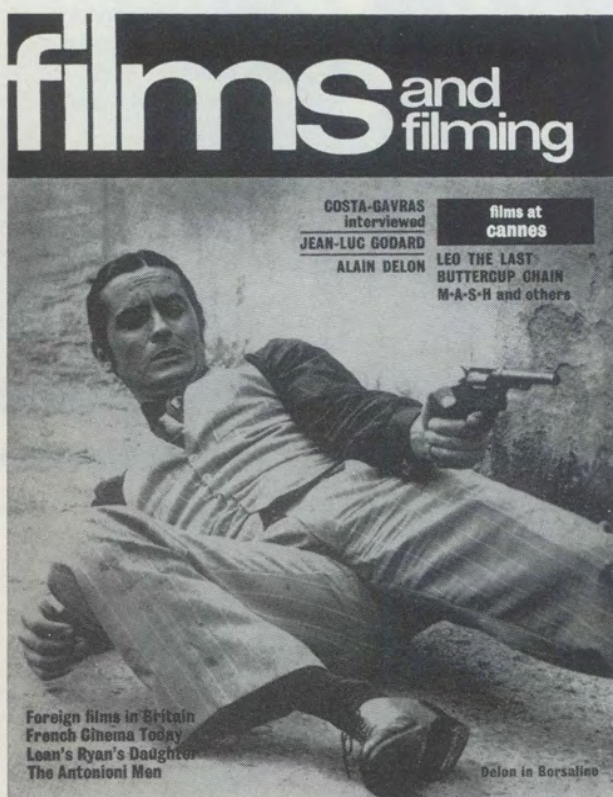
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a film by John Chamberlain

cast: Taylor Mead, Ultra Violet

Strange comic film juxtaposing the weird timeless and sometimes hilarious antics of superground star Taylor Mead with John Chamberlain's intoxicated vision of beautifully endowed Ultra Violet highlights of the film warmly reflect the rich exotic colours and light of Yucatan and its people here par excellence is the lunatic beautiful often pretentious fringe reminding us again that "chaos is the eternal ground of creation".

*16 mm colour 69 mins. sound



MARE'S TAIL

a film by David Larcher

A film like MARE'S TAIL is an epic film flight into an inner space. It is a 2½ hour visual accumulation, which, as it is the film-maker's personal odyssey, becomes the odyssey of each of us. . . . It flies, swims and moves from point to point—just like each of us. The lines move into shapes which move into orbits and your eyes water into colours. What each of us *can* see is more than what we do see. The film becomes one of the most vital penetrations into the experience of seeing. . . . Ranging from the abstract to the figurative form MARE'S TAIL allows no direct verbal way to give it its position. It not only goes from the abstract to the figurative, in terms of its objective view, but explores the subjective responses as well. It is a classic in film perception.

(from Steve Dwoskin's forthcoming book 'Film Is' to be published by Peter Owen Ltd.)

16mm colour 150 mins. sound

TIMES FOR

a film by Stephen Dwoskin

cast: Carolee Schneemann, Maurice Colbourne, Verity Bargate, Carmel Court, Sally Gidal

Once upon anytime in a world like now, any man wandered into an island of women. Their succulent presence, like many Circes, drew his fantasy. He follows. He seeks a kingdom, but as I foretold you, we're all spirits, and are melted into air, into thin air: and, like the baseless fabric of this vision, the cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces, the solemn temples, the great globe itself, yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve, and, like this insubstantial pageant faded, leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep.

Gold Ducat Mannheim Festival 1970, San Francisco Festival 1970

16 mm colour 80 mins. sound

NECROPOLIS

a film by Franco Brocani

cast: Viva, Pierre Clementi, Tina Aumont, Paul Jabara, Louis Waldon

Necropolis is an absolutely storyless film. Instead of a rhythm which spirals downwards into the deep, there is here a fluctuating movement, like the tide with its slow and constant oscillation; Here you will not find a project in time but a risk in space. By means of abstract indications, signal-fragments, a real panorama is created. End-point is beginning point. The film becomes a trace, an uneasy series of foot-steps following which everyone, looking for the others, should find himself. Keeping in mind this ideology of fragments, Necropolis may be considered the place of excess. History, culture, cities are the result of an uninterrupted sublimation, the effect of "chystallized sins, of accumulating expiations". A kind of spiritual guerilla is therefore fought under the banner of utopia and love. The main characters are: Frankenstein, Attila, Montezuma, Hellogabalus, the Bloody Countessa Marthory and the Devil. Emblematic situations such as Magic, Religion, Bourgeois warfare, have been chosen at their most poignant charge. All is flattened, never "told". What remains is their graffiti.

35mm colour 90 mins. sound

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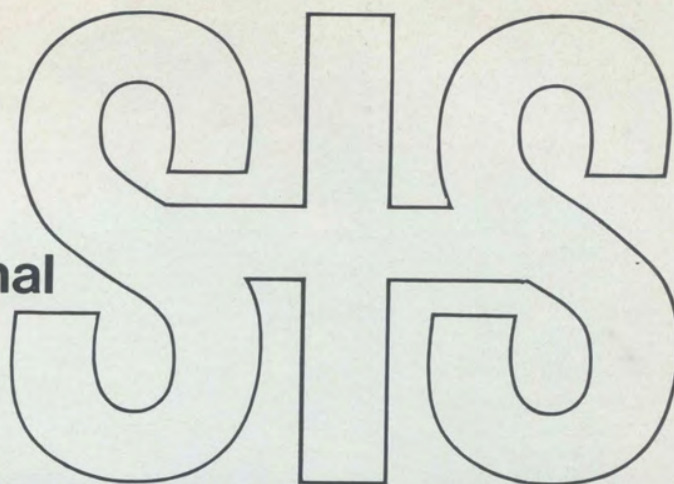
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 Designer: John Harmer
 Business Manager: John Smoker

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Winter 1970/71

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On the cover: Jon Voight in Paul Williams' 'The Revolutionary'

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CHABROL

talks to Rui Nogueira and Nicoletta Zalaffi

What stage have you reached with your current project, *La Décade Prodigieuse*, from the Ellery Queen novel?

I still have to hear from Orson, which is not easy since he only communicates by cable.

Things were going all right, but we have had no reply from him for a week. We don't even know where he is any more. The project is still on, but I think we will probably have to delay the shooting. I've already cast Orson Welles and Catherine Deneuve. I wanted Tom Courtenay as well, but he is acting in the theatre. The English are always acting in the theatre. They're always busy playing Shakespeare, which leaves me busy trying to find actors who are free. I've left it all very late really; but I went to sleep on it a bit because I was thinking about it. I am rather at the mercy of time, but not of money. The film is going to be expensive, but André Génovès and I have managed to set it up ourselves. There are no big American companies to come along and re-cut it or anything like that. We're completely free.

Throughout your career you've shown noticeable loyalty to your collaborators, whether producer, cameraman, editor... to say nothing of the actress.

That isn't loyalty. It's selfishness. I can't conceive changing cameramen and editors from film to film. It's hard enough to make yourself understood without having to start again from scratch on every picture. If you take the same people each time, they know what you want, and they are able to make much more of a contribution to the film. With the producer, it's even more a matter of selfishness. He leaves me alone. It's marvellous.

Do you think that *Les Biches* marks a turning-point in your career?

Yes, in that it was the first film which I made exactly as I wished. Although the first film I made with Génovès was a frightful experience—the thing I made in Greece, *La Route de Corinthe*—he kept to my making *Les Biches*. I was able to have the actors I wanted, and I made it just the way I wanted. Since the film did well, Génovès said to me, 'We may as well do a third...' and we've just kept on.

Can you tell me about your beginnings as a critic; and how you came to be interested in films?

Oh, God! That's all far away in the mists of time. My earliest memory of the cinema is Mervyn LeRoy's *Anthony Adverse*. I don't know if you recall it, but there is a fantastic detail in it: in the duel it is the old man who kills the young one. That had a tremendous effect on me. Then I was

bowled over by Errol Flynn in *Captain Blood*; and as kids often do, I started to direct my friends: I was a real little Michael Curtiz. After that there was *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. And I was very struck by Mickey Rooney in *Boys' Town*, directed by Norman Taurog—the story of Father Flanagan. Oh, that really moved me. Ever since that film I've always loved hysterical actors.

But you weren't intended to go into movies?

At that time I wasn't really intended for anything; because I was only eight. But during the war, when I was in Creuse, between the ages of ten and fourteen, I established the 'Cinéma de Sardantais' (Sardan is where I later shot *Le Beau Serge*), along with another boy who was also evacuated from Paris. With a capital of 75,000 old francs which we'd collected from here and there, we bought a 16mm

projector. Our shows took place in a barn, using rented films. Programme director, exhibitor and projectionist: those were my first jobs.

We were obliged to show a certain quota of German films because of some agreement with Goering or Goebbels, but to annoy the Germans we cheated the publicity, just like real exhibitors. Since no one in that part of the country knew anything about the cinema, we made them think that we were showing American films, and would advertise, for instance, 'Heinrich George in an American super-production.' After the war I came back to Paris and no longer worked with movies. But I adored cinema; so I went to the Lycée Montaigne, where Langlois was giving his first shows, and then to the Cinémathèque in the Avenue de Messine. I also went to the Ciné-Club du Quartier Latin, which was where I got to know Rohmer, Jean-Luc and then Truffaut.

The legend is that your meeting with the *Cahiers du Cinéma* group took place at the Studio Montparnasse (at that time run by Jean-Louis Chéray) after the screening of a Hitchcock film; and that your great knowledge of the work and world of Hitchcock earned you a place with the magazine...

No: that's a total myth. I was doing my secondary and advanced studies when the others were still in the first grade. I had married well—at that time I had a very rich wife. I was a gigolo; and had to find some kind of work. Coming back after my military service (I had managed to get myself posted as a projectionist in Germany) I met up with my friends again, and they told me I ought to write things for *Cahiers*. The first piece I wrote was about *Singin' in the Rain*. It was only after the special Hitchcock number that the whole great 'Hitchcock-metaphysic' myth started.

And then you did the book on Hitchcock, with Eric Rohmer...

Rohmer did most of it. I did the English period; also *Notorious*, *Stage Fright*... and *Rebecca*, I think.

Hitchcock apart, your heroes at this time were Wilder and Lang?

I had a passion for Lang before Hitchcock. *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse* made a stunning impression on me... Sub-

sequently, as Hitchcock's films accumulated while Lang was directing less, my affections transferred themselves to Hitchcock. But without Lang, Hitchcock would not have existed.

Staircases play a great part in your films, as they do in Wyler's...

Yes, that's true: there are a lot of staircases in my films. Why? First because I think staircases are beautiful; and then, as it happens, I have almost always lived with staircases. Before the war my parents had a duplex, so we had a staircase inside the flat; during the war I was stuck in a house with a staircase... So many things can happen on staircases. They are like a spinal column...

And your experience as a projectionist?

Yes, I know: I put a lot of projections in my films, but it's not at all with an idea of having films within films. Perhaps I simply like projectionists.

Were you a good projectionist?

Better than the projectionists around here, I have to admit, because down there the audience yelled when it was out of focus. Perhaps nowadays audiences don't know when it's deliberate or not, because of the 'New Look'. If someone says, 'Here—it's all out of focus,' you reply: 'Oh no: the idea is to isolate that leaf down there.' Then people exclaim: 'Ah! It's intentional!' There is even a film which stays very hazy quite intentionally from beginning to end: Elio Petri's *A Quiet Little Place in the Country*.



Chabrol in 'La Muette'

Does the fact that you have acted yourself help when you direct actors?

A little; but indirectly. I can assess the feeling which it is possible to experience, first in rehearsal and afterwards in shooting. And I have learned to recognise the moment when you have to stop an actor rehearsing and to start shooting a scene.

I'm told that you are a big ham and always try to steal scenes...

Yes. I know who told you that. Stéphane (Stéphane Audran). It's true. We played together and I quite outshone her in my sketch in *Paris Vu Par...* In *La Muette* you only notice me, and I am very much better. I do more than she does as well. I do marvels in fifteen minutes...

How did you feel about acting in front of the camera a scene of having a meal together, as in real life?

But we've never had that kind of row, ourselves! On the contrary, I remember

that Barbet Schroeder came to call on us one morning and said he wanted some little background noises. Stéphane and I were in bed, having breakfast, and we were just like a couple of dead fish in front of the microphone. It was very odd. We had a lot of fun over that.

To what extent were you involved in Project No. 4 of the Etats Généraux of the cinema? In *La Femme Infidèle* you refer to this period of May-June 1968 by showing an inscription, 'Vive le projet IV' scrawled in red paint on the roof of a car parked outside the King Club.*

I frankly believed in the project at that time. No, I didn't really believe in it, but I told myself, 'After all, you never know; perhaps we'll get rid of these bastards and it will become possible to organise things seriously. So why not look at things in a healthy way and in a completely new light. It doesn't matter if it is utopian.' So we devised a scheme for cinema exhibition which was really irreproachable. It could be put into operation tomorrow. It is childishly simple. You replace the road tax by a cinema tax; and there you are. The project did not get a majority vote—only a hundred votes—but if the Etats Généraux had lasted a month longer it would have been carried, because people would have realised that it was the only one that made sense.

We reckoned that there was only one possible drawback: the *clochards*. They might have come to take up a cinema seat simply to have somewhere to sit and snooze.

Have you followed the C.N.P. (Cinéma National Populaire) experiment?

A bit, at the start, but it was clobbered before it began. The moment there is a programme, a thing has no more interest.

The cinema ought to be like a *pissotière* or a café, with free admission. And exhibition ought to be automatic, rather like television. That would do away with critical selection, which is always misleading, since critics inevitably go wrong all the time... So good films would get as much chance of recognition as bad ones.

In the present crisis in the French cinema—it really seems a permanent crisis—you are directing more regularly than you've ever done before. How do you account for your rather privileged situation?

If my films stopped doing well, I would find myself shooting fewer films. As it is, my films take money. I'm glad for me, and sorry for the others.

The S.R.F. (Société de Réalisateurs des Films) is by definition a bad thing, because they are all too much involved with each other, and now they are all writing one another's scripts. Albicocco's next film is written by Kast, the last Kast was written by Pollet... It's a sort of musical chairs... And their solution to the salvation of the French cinema is to hold conferences, poor

*Project 4 was a plan to establish films and TV as public services independent of state control. Its three main proposals were: free admission to all films; equal opportunities for professional status within the industry; and cultural decentralisation, through regional centres, mobile cinemas for rural areas, abolition of exclusive first runs, etc. It was envisaged that all film production would be financed out of a general tax.

chaps! Two fundamental things are necessary to save the French cinema: immediate tax relief, and the abolition of censorship. But these people are going to talk before those prerequisites are achieved! The others will be ahead of them for twenty years. I don't know if you have read the report of the Centre National du Cinéma about the Sirizi or Surizi or some such conference, between the Centre and the professional people. It has to be read to be believed. They say things like: 'It is urgent to make films for a total public, for every kind of public...' What in the world does that really mean!

There's no rule to determine if a film is going to succeed or not.

There is: a film is successful if there is nothing about it to stop it being successful.

Of course: but probabilities are still uncertainties. And on the other hand, who could have foreseen the success of *Easy Rider*?

Easy Rider couldn't lose money. What is frightful about the cinema is that these people always play single numbers. They say: 'Ah! Play that number and you'll get back 35 times the stake!' It doesn't work. You have to play the even chances. You put money on black reckoning that black will come up, but you can also play the black and the red at the same time, *à cheval*, because that way you can't lose. You only lose on the zero...

What is your current position in relationship to the Nouvelle Vague?

The Nouvelle Vague has become a rather dirty word these days. First of all what is the New Wave? The New Wave of what?

I'm talking about the group which was built up around Godard, Truffaut, Rohmer, you...

Each has evolved in his own particular direction. Jean-Luc, who is a hardened celibate and suicide, commits his suicide in different countries because he loves to make film after film and didacticism after didacticism. That is fine, that's what he wants. François wants to stop now for a couple of years because he has just killed off Antoine Doinel. That's fine too... I don't say he's right to stop, but... Rohmer, on the other hand, never wanted to have an important position in the French cinema. He just wanted to make his *contes moraux*, which is what he did.

People are always eating in your films. Do you know Marco Ferreri who also likes gastronomy?

He's a great chef, Marco...

Do you agree with him that gastronomy is really a neurosis for neurotics, allowing an escape from reality?

Gastronomy? What a funny idea! What a weird argument! I've just one question: what would Marco do if he didn't eat? Would he or would he not escape reality? He would starve to death. He would die. So he would escape reality promptly and without delay. Quite the contrary, gastronomy is one of those rare things which are not neurotic. Marco loves eating. I don't know if he likes it in a neurotic fashion, but faced with a good cassoulet, he's never given me the impression of a neurotic.

Why, contrary to your usual habits, do you make everyone eat so stingily in *La Rupture*?

You are quite right, they don't 'eat' in *La Rupture*. It's awful. For me that



A Chabrol dinner party in 'La Femme Infidèle'

contributes to the uneasiness of the atmosphere... But in my next film, *La Décade Prodigieuse*, there are going to be some very fine and elegant meals. I ought to say that *La Rupture* is a straightforward film which does not aim at any reverse twist in the ending. The good people stay good. The villain stays bad. The only thing that has a twist is the conspiracy, which turns back on the one who plans it rather than on the victim. But these are things which happen, aren't they? I wanted to make a melodrama, a real melodrama. I wanted to stop people saying: 'The film reveals melodramatic tendencies.' If there are tendencies, you might as well make a melodrama, which is to say, a tear-jerking drama with music. And the music covers the words... Then the people who don't like melodrama are going to say 'It's grandiloquent'... Well, it's not grandiloquent. It's melodramatic.

You always like to follow things through to their conclusions...

Always. I like nuances, but *underneath*. I would be awfully shocked to read, for instance: 'the film ends happily with these images.' I always go a bit beyond the point where it 'ends happily'.

There is no film-maker more fervently anti-Nazi than Fritz Lang. Yet he was fascinated by Nazism. Well, I find that in a certain way you are fascinated by creeps.

Yes; because I am so strongly anti-creep. Something which always annoys me in films is when supposedly intelligent people are made to act in a thoroughly

stupid way just for the convenience of the scenario. You must know whether the character is stupid or intelligent, and make him act accordingly. My next film—supposing that I find Welles again—will be interesting from this point of view, although it is not based on stupidity but on intelligence. The trap is just the same.

There is another of your films which I like very much, exactly because of the treatment of creeps: *La Ligne de Démarcation*. I know you don't like it at all, but...

Actually I like it more and more. I'll explain. I hated it for a long time because it really made me suffer physically to see all those creeps—even though I ate very well, and it was a nice place. They really were an absolutely extraordinary bunch of characters, but it took place in a context in which I would rather not have shown their awfulness.

I have a great respect for the Resistance of those times, but I only had two solutions for the treatment of the scenario by Colonel Rémy: either to send it up completely—which wasn't impossible—or to treat it absolutely seriously, saying: 'O.K. Here's a bunch of characters. Let's enjoy it!'—and it was real, dead-pan stuff. There's not a second of humour in *La Ligne de Démarcation*, and at the same time there's not a second which is *not* a second of humour, because it is a film which is entirely serious and totally stupid. You know that the old French Resistance fighters—the film was promoted by 'Rhinet-Danube', a veterans' association—came to

all the showings with their berets, their medals and their flags, and stood up and joined in when 'La Marseillaise' came on at the end of the film? They were thrilled. And Colonel Rémy cried. 'Oh, how beautiful it is! How true it is! This is really France!' Much of the Resistance was lunatic romanticism. In those times they were absolutely heedless. Networks were dismantled as fast as they were built up. Colonel Rémy was... it was 'Groucho Meets the Gestapo'.... He is very, very nice, but an old reactionary.

Why did so many of the Resistance people gravitate towards the Right?

It comes from the fact that they were really nationalists. They didn't resist for the sake of their liberty, so much as against the occupation of French soil.

Before *Les Biches*, if you had asked anyone which of your films he preferred he would probably have singled out *Les Bonnes Femmes*. But the film did not do very well...

Yes. Not many people have seen it... There's no mystery about it, it's the first film over which I was really roughly handled. Recently Janine Bazin very much wanted me to do a broadcast in the series *Cinéastes de Notre Temps*: and then, it's stupid, but I simply couldn't face it. She had sent me some contemporary reviews of *Les Bonnes Femmes*. To my astonishment most of them said that it was an odious film. Lots of left-wingers found it simply Fascist. It was a film which insulted the working class, and I don't know what else.

Some critics decided also that in this



'La Ligne de Démarcation'

picture I was trying to be a Fellini. There they were as wrong as they could be. While I love Fellini, one of the films I detest above all others in the world is *Notti di Cabiria*. It seems to me a completely untruthful film. The basic idea of *Les Bonnes Femmes* is exactly the same as that of *Notti di Cabiria*, but it is treated in a completely contrary way. By definition, there is no film further from Fellini than *Les Bonnes Femmes*. Well, there are critics who have found it 'Fellinian', which is to say that one has found oneself face to face with total, astonishing incomprehension.

At a certain point, *Cahiers du Cinéma*, in which you had made your start as a critic, dropped you... To take you up again... And now again drop you...

It doesn't worry me, because in any case you never know these days if *Cahiers* likes you or not—it seems to me to have become quite impossible to understand what they think or what they write. They've succeeded in abandoning a bourgeois way of writing, but I think they have not yet achieved a proletarian style in compensation...

In your films you like to trace the relations between appearance and reality.

Yes: as Claudel says, 'The worst is not always certain, and things which appear to be are not always true...' You have at one and the same time to show things as they appear, and then as they are. Appearances are; and the inverse must also be true.

There are often quotations in your films: T. S. Eliot in *La Femme Infidèle*, Balzac in *Le Boucher*, Racine in *La Rupture*...

I'll be truthful. It's to give them substance. I need a degree of critical support for my films to succeed: without that they can fall flat on their faces. So, what do you have to do? You have to help the critics over their notices, right? So, I give them a hand. 'Try with Eliot and see if you find me there.' Or 'How do you fancy Racine?' I give them some little things to grasp at. In *Le Boucher* I stuck Balzac there in the middle, and they threw themselves on it like poverty upon the world. It's good not to leave them staring at a blank sheet of

paper, not knowing how to begin... 'This film is definitely Balzacian,' and there you are; they're off. After that they can go on to say whatever they want.

What is a character for you? At what point does a character begin to interest you?

It isn't the character which interests me at the start—a character you can always fabricate. It's a sort of... not the plot... What interests me is to tease the audience along, to set it chasing off in one direction, and then to turn things inside out.

And how do you work with Jean Rabier? Do you have much discussion before shooting?

Not any more. Now, he reads the script, then he finds out what he wants to know. I give him points of reference to American cameramen: 'Wong Howe this bit.' 'Fine.' 'Ernest Laszlo.' 'O.K.' It's exceedingly practical.

It may seem paradoxical, but your films do seem to betray a respect for the family unit.

Ah! I like the family very much. I think it's a much misunderstood thing; very beautiful, and very delicate, like all beautiful things. So, I am for it. FOR! The bourgeois family is a farce, you realise? It doesn't exist. But a real family, that is something wonderful.

Starting from the sketch of *La Muette* it would be possible to imagine the following. The mother does not die when she falls down the stairs. The little boy grows up, becomes the character played by Jean-Claude Drouot in *La Rupture*, and kills his mother, by making her fall downstairs. The circle is completed.

Yes, absolutely. It's the same world... There's no shadow of doubt about it. There is a direct connection of social milieu between *La Muette* and *La Rupture*.

In *La Femme Infidèle*, it is only through a lie that the husband and wife can find each other again...

Yes. You talk about appearances. They break at a given moment, and then each one goes half of the way towards rediscovering the other. Whereas the characters

in *La Rupture* are just caricatures of families. They are all prison warders, vampires...

Why do you never give a film a really conclusive ending?

Simply because it's never completely finished. You begin at some point, and so you have to stop at some point.

You begin *La Rupture* with a hospital sequence, which could make one think back to the last scenes of *Le Boucher*?

But I only noticed that afterwards. What is terrifying is that my next film will begin with spirits, like a reminder of *La Rupture*, yet it really is pure chance.

Why are all your heroines called Hélène?

It's a name which goes quite well in most countries and is familiar to most people; then it's a name I like; and moreover it comes from mythology... And finally I tend to keep to the same names to make things easier. There's not only a Hélène in my films. There's always a Paul and a Charles as well... And Charles will never kill Paul. That is a basic postulate, and it really started with *Les Cousins*. One of the cousins was called Charles and the other Paul, and they were two completely contrasting characters. Now when I return to this duality of characters, I tell myself that it is unthinkable, given that I started off with a Charles who could not possibly kill a Paul, not to continue in this same way. One of them may have to do away with the other, but you'll never see a Charles kill a Paul. Never.

What importance do you attach to editing?

Editing, in general, is the assembly of the watch—as far as I'm concerned, at least. There's a chap who puts the watch together. If he doesn't put it together well, the watch won't go. And if it comes into his head to change the positioning of the parts, it's quite certain that the watch won't go at all. I don't think that it is possible to retrieve films in the editing. And I shoot very little footage, so there are not many alternative solutions. In fact there is only one way.

Hal Wallis told me that, for him, a film cut in the editing is a mutilated film. Do you agree?

Yes, but I also agree with Samuel Goldwyn, who said that once a scene is shot it always figures in the film, even if it is later cut out in the editing. That's a very interesting theory. Anyway, though I don't much like the second solution, it is as true as the first one.

Your films tell stories that are very easy to follow. Should we deduce a reaction against the rather 'elusive' manner of a certain type of new film-maker?

I don't much care for the 'New Look', the 'focusers', the focusing in the course of a shot, the mistiness. It must come from a great failure in the sense of composition.

When you have two people in a room, and one of them has to leave on tiptoe, morally on tiptoe, you have to know how to shoot it. There's another solution: to get the camera behind a vase of flowers, and focus on the vase... In reaction against this I like sharp, clear films. And I like understandable stories. There are films of which you might say: 'This shouldn't be shown to a dog.' The very least you can do is to try to be simple when you want to say complicated things. And you should never complicate something simple.

Tom Milne

'It will be questioned, "When the sun rises, do you not see a disc of fire, somewhat like a guinea?" Oh no, no! I see an innumerable company of the heavenly host, crying "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty!"'

—WILLIAM BLAKE

La Rupture

Chabrol's latest film is based on a thriller by Charlotte Armstrong about a woman, blameless in her marriage, whose small son is injured in a fight with her husband, and who subsequently has to fight like a tigress against the forces massed against her when her wealthy father-in-law tries to gain legal custody of the child. The French title, *Le Jour des Parques*, plays happily on the similarity between 'Pâques' (Easter) and 'Parques' (The Parcae, or Fates).

So, remembering the fascination Destiny holds for Chabrol—whether simply present, as in Lang, or intervening, as in Hitchcock—one sits up, nose aquiver with recognition, as the camera zooms in with awestruck slowness to the black door of a private *pension* which stands serenely white in its own tree-shaded grounds and where Hélène (Stéphane Audran) has taken a room to be near her child in hospital. For here, unmistakably in the three parched old ladies who rule the salon with their inquisitive stares and their tarot cards, are the Fatal Sisters.

SONGS OF INNOCENCE

'La Rupture': Audran and Cassel





'La Rupture': the three old ladies

Or so it only seems, since Chabrol, like Blake, now sees beyond the disc of fire to glimpse the dazzling mystery it conceals; and the three old ladies are as much a red herring as the quotation from Racine which serves both as an epigraph and as a critical lifebuoy. Fate is indeed present in the film, actively intervening to preserve the innocent heroine from the wolves that would prey on her, but in a mysterious, evanescent form that even the three old ladies, inquisitively alert to every nuance of gossip and behaviour, cannot comprehend. It is there, magically, in the involuntary gesture of benediction made by an itinerant balloon-seller with his stick as he bends over to talk to the despairing Hélène in the park. It is there, too, even more gravely and luminously, in the ghostly hand which hovers almost invisibly over the tramlines—a reflection, presumably, of the unseen driver at the helm—as she retraces the marvellous tram-ride of Murnau's *Sunrise* to pour out her anguished love story to a sympathetic lawyer.

Actually, the Racine quotation ('Mais quelle épaisse nuit tout à coup m'environne?') is not quite so arbitrary as Chabrol would suggest. Not only because it evokes the tigerish passions of Racine heroines, but because it reminds one (the line is from *Andromaque*, and is spoken by Orestes when he learns that Hermione has killed herself) that *La Rupture* is first and foremost a love story, and one which has its roots in melodrama as unashamedly as any Racine tragedy. Gone, therefore, is the serpentine elegance of *Les Biches*, the calm stasis of *La Femme Infidèle*, the geometrical urgency of *Que la Bête Meure*, to be replaced by an abrupt, staccato style in which one is constantly caught off guard by *la rupture*. The pre-credits sequence, for instance, opens neutrally with a scene in which Hélène busies herself in the kitchen, giving her small son his breakfast. Suddenly, wide-eyed, dishevelled, half-naked, the husband (Jean-Claude Drouot) erupts into the doorway. As she apprehensively tries to calm him, he suddenly attacks her, moaning like a wounded animal. 'Maman, maman, j'ai peur,' the child whimpers, and he turns,

picks the boy up, and hurls him against the wall. With the child lying in a pool of blood on the floor, Hélène beats her husband insensible with a frying pan and summons help from the neighbours.

The credits are superimposed on a background of suburban streets, seen speeding by from the interior of a moving car. Then neutrality again as Hélène is questioned by the police as she waits at the hospital for news of her son, hope and anguish evenly balanced by the two patches of colour which focus her attention: the shimmering white light behind the glass-panelled door where her child is being tended, and the lurid red of the tapestry on the wall behind the detective. At this point, the red wins. One is inclined, in other words, to doubt Hélène's motives, to see her inarticulate hysteria as expressive of some hidden guilt. The impression is not substantially altered by the appearance of the father-in-law (Michel Bouquet), dissected with characteristic loathing by Chabrol as cold, calculating and smugly bourgeois in his determination to gain custody of the child, no matter what the cost. Rather, it is increased by the force of his allegations that she—once a nude dancer in cabaret, now a hostess in a club of some sort—ruined his son's life by her 'unsuitable' behaviour.

Gradually, however, one realises that, motivated exclusively by concern for her child, Hélène is living on the edge of hysteria (a marvellously raw, sustained performance by Stéphane Audran), without thought, without will even, in her one-track fear of losing him. Unlike the people who surround her, she has no defence mechanism. Her father-in-law finds refuge from his selfishness in the conviction that he is doing his best for his son and grandson. The seedy young man (Jean-Pierre Cassel) he hires to find—or fabricate—evidence against her, returns home from each unsavoury stage in his mission to find solace in the cheerfully uncomplicated sexuality of his mistress. And the inhabitants of the *pension* all look elsewhere than at themselves: the owner coos over the guests she considers as her family, blotting out her

failure with her drunken husband and idiot daughter; the three old ladies hide the nothingness of their lives under an endless merry-go-round of cards and gossip; and the out-of-work actor, arrayed in florid speeches and fancy clothes, directs himself in a starring role every time he opens his mouth.

Events, however, have cast Hélène adrift from the comforting lie of domesticity she was living. As she herself puts it, in a metaphor inspired by a balloon-seller who drifts through the park, amusing a small boy by letting his balloons hang in mid-air, moored only by the stick to which they are attached, 'I feel sometimes that someone is trying to separate me from the world.' The first sign of re-connection comes on the almost mystic tram-ride when she pours out her history to the young lawyer (Michel Duchaussoy), who has unhesitatingly accepted her case even though she cannot afford the fees he cannot afford to waive.

A close-up of the conductor-arm making contact with the overhead electric cable; the tram sets off; and she embarks on the story of how she first met her husband, how he seemed to be ashamed of his parents and never told her they were rich, how furious his parents were over the marriage. The other passengers sit silent, blotted out. 'Et puis j'étais enceinte,' she murmurs, and the camera zooms softly in to Duchaussoy as he listens, spellbound. A second shot of the conductor-arm sparking its connection. His parents, she explains, tried to be nice but couldn't be. Again the camera pans over the dead, silent passengers. And as she explains how he began taking drugs because he failed as a writer (she went back to work to provide for the family), the camera cuts twice to a shot of the rails curving emptily ahead, the second time with the ghostly hand hovering over the track. 'I don't think there's the slightest possibility,' the lawyer states with reassuring conviction, 'that they will entrust the child to him.' 'Yes,' she answers despairingly, 'but they have so much money.'

Her troubles are by no means over, since Jean-Pierre Cassel's absurdly contorted plot to discredit her by corrupting the idiot child from the *pension* (drugs and dirty pictures to be administered by his mistress, disguised as Hélène) has hardly got under way. But in this magnificently imagined sequence on the tram, with awakening conscience enclosed by twin parentheses of concern, Chabrol not only justifies his quotation from *Sunrise*, but shows with the naked, unguarded simplicity of Blake in his *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, how the angels rally to the defence of the innocent: 'When wolves and tygers howl for prey/They pitying stand and weep/Seeking to drive their thirst away/And keep them from the sheep/But if they rush dreadful/The angels most heedful/Receive each mild spirit/New worlds to inherit.'

In pursuance of his plot, Cassel sets the ball rolling by telling the worried lady of the *pension* that he has found a new house for her to move to (the old one is being pulled down by 'Sunrise Promotions' as a notice-board indicates; a subsidiary company, naturally, of Hélène's father-in-law, the destroyer of love), and arranges for her to take the three old ladies to see their new home, leaving the way clear for the 'corruption' of her daughter. 'The world is

made of miracles,' he tells her ironically as she tries to thank him; and goes to see his employer, Hélène's father-in-law, to warn him that his task will not be an easy one since Hélène is 'as white as snow and strong as a rock.'

Almost immediately the first little miracle operates on Hélène's behalf when her lawyer tells her that he has managed, against all probability, to obtain a divorce hearing for her very soon, which means that her father-in-law will have very little time to rally his forces. The second follows when a friendly doctor casually remarks that Cassel is not, as he had said to ingratiate himself with her, a convalescent patient from the hospital where her child is being treated. The third, when the actor's ruffled pride prompts him to come and tell her that he had been tempted to take the easy way by her father-in-law's offer to help him to a career in films if he would spy on her. Finally, governed even more openly by chance than the rest since it occurs as she is about to enter the *pension*, hesitates, and for no particular reason turns back to sit for a moment on a bench in the park, comes the balloon-seller's warning: 'Alors, madame, vous avez perdu votre ombre?' He means, as he explains, the man who has been shadowing her, thus alerting her for the first time to the plot against her; but the benignity of his concern, and of the balloons dipping in benediction as he stands over her, suggests that he also means that the shadows are lightening over her.

Seemingly, though, things couldn't be blacker. The *pension* is deserted; the idiot child, fed with drugged sweets, is captive in a darkened room watching dirty movies; and Hélène herself is sped through the night on a wild goose chase to the airport*, her money stolen, as well as the air ticket with which she planned to take her child back to France and safety. (The action is set, unsettlingly, in an unspecified country, actually Belgium.) At this point, terrified and alone in the deserted airport, and now fully aware of the malice ranged against her, she is suddenly galvanised into action by the force of her love, and drives, not to the *pension* or the hospital, but to her in-laws' home. After a wild flight through the dead city, dark tunnels ahead, the grating discords of Chabrol's montage become almost paroxysmic as Hélène brushes aside all opposition to rush upstairs to the room where her husband lies, still wild-eyed and despairing, cosseted unavailingly by his doting parents. It is *l'amour fou*, stark and helpless, as they embrace each other passionately, forgiving, loving, yet each aware that the other is at the end of his tether, and that it is money that lies between them: 'Je ne peux plus' . . . 'Je suis comme mort ici.'

The film ends as it began, in melodrama transcended. The husband, a zombie by his own definition, hurls his mother downstairs

* Another marvellous Chabrol sign here: Cassel, having got Audran out of the house with the summons to meet a friend at the airport, tries to get her to go with him by asking her forgiveness, by 'confessing', and finally by offering her a drugged sweet. She refuses to listen. Suddenly a light comes on in a house as they stand arguing in the street, throwing her face into dazzling illumination. A taxi passes. She hails it and escapes.



'La Rupture': Jean-Pierre Cassel as the uneasy tormentor

out of the way (echoes of *La Muette*), and turns up at the *pension* to attack and be stabbed to death by the terrified Cassel, now definitively unmasked. And Hélène, drugged in the last twist of the plot against her, rushes out to the park with the three old ladies flapping joyously after to prevent her from floating away, and begs God the balloon-seller to free her guardian angels. He does so, grumbling 'Who's going to pay me?' 'I'm going to see my son,' cries Hélène; and the last shot shows the balloons—celebrating her resurrection, or

le jour de Pâques—drifting away, at home in the sky. Love itself, as in *Sunrise*, is perfect; only society can spoil it.

'It portrays the world as it will be in ten years time if . . .' said Chabrol of *La Rupture* when it was in production. 'A really black film.' True, but also a dazzlingly tender one which confirms the emotion, moving beyond reach of the printed word in its utter simplicity, as Rui Nogueira told me after interviewing Chabrol, with which he talks of the sanctity of the family: 'Je suis pour!'



'La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret'

La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret

For Franju, of course, the cinema has always been a window opening on to a vision of magic where the natural world lies at the service of the innocent—like the dogs of *Les Yeux sans Visage* and *Judex*—in their quest to wrench themselves away from intolerable reality into a dream of freedom. It is therefore hardly surprising that, while remaining largely faithful to Zola's novel,

Franju has transformed it from what is basically a psychological analysis of a young priest's frustrations and inevitable lapse from grace, into a fairytale of love eternal.

Although precisely the same incidents are repeated in both book and film, and Zola actually pushes further than Franju on his own territory in conjuring the fantasy world of *Le Paradou*—where the Abbé Mouret and Albine taste the fruits of sin, and which



is no less than the Garden of Eden reborn—the difference in tone and approach is crucial. Franju makes no reference, for instance, to the lengthy analysis of how, as a child and at the seminary, Serge sublimated his longings into a fanatical devotion to images of the Virgin Mary; and he also cuts, more importantly, the whole of Zola's subsequent description of how Serge, after his fall, transfers his devotions to Christ on the Cross, thereby contriving to reconcile himself, through self-torment and self-negation, to his separation from Albine. Franju's Abbé Mouret never changes his allegiance: for him, Albine and the Virgin are one.

Perhaps the most significant departure from the original therefore comes in the scenes at Le Paradou. In Zola's novel, when Serge has his nervous breakdown while serving as priest to the barren, God-forsaken, little village of Les Artaud, and is taken to the luxuriant estate of Le Paradou nearby to be cared for by Albine, niece of the robust old freethinker Jeanbernard, he is described as 'reborn'. Literally, since Albine not only has to nurse him back to health, but teaches him to walk again, to revel in the sun, to explore the natural world. In total innocence, delighting in their play, the young couple roam the paradise in which they are the only living human beings, gradually coming closer to the tree they somehow know to be forbidden, but which Albine insists is the tree of life, the source of all delights. But Albine is as much a child as Serge. She does not seduce him: they grow up together,

and together are tempted to taste the forbidden fruits of love. Despite his overt allegorical intentions—he even has the dark, hellfire-howling Brother Archangias stand guard, with a stick rather than a fiery sword, over the entrance to Le Paradou to prevent Serge from returning—Zola's approach is fundamentally realistic, his thesis one of scientific determinism. 'C'était le jardin qui avait voulu la faute': it is natural for man to love, unnatural for religion to repress.

Franju's Albine, however, is purely a creature of myth, first glimpsed by Serge half-hidden in the depths of paradise as he goes with his Uncle Pascal to visit Jeanbernard at Le Paradou, and then appearing before him as a radiant vision in white, crowned with a garland of wild flowers. Far from being an innocent child, she is Morgan le Fay, Yseult and Sleeping Beauty all rolled into one; a temptress, an ideal, freely offering herself to Serge, who has lost only the memory of his priesthood, not his adult longings, as a result of his illness.

Around her there hangs an indefinable air of magic as she caresses Serge's imagination with the fabulous tale of Le Paradou, built long ago by a noble lord to house his love, who never again stepped beyond its walls and whose beauty was seen by none. Years passed, the castle burned, and when the noble lord left, his hair was completely white. But somewhere in the forest, where his love lies buried, is a place of enchantment which she and Serge will find, and where no one will find them. 'Quel plaisir

de s'asseoir sous l'ombre d'un arbre. Moi, je voudrais mourir comme ça. Tu me prendras dans tes bras . . .' The tale is to be found in Zola, but again anchored to a naturalistic context since Serge and Albine are first awakened to their desire for each other by a relic of these lovers from the past: some faded murals, 'jolies indécences du boudoir,' which they gradually learn to decipher.

The sign that Franju intends to abandon any sort of realism is clear. After a summary introduction to the hard facts of life in Les Artaud—a young couple copulating amid the rocks and parched earth of a ploughed field, Brother Archangias haranguing the girl's furious father, and a glimpse of Archangias at work in his parish terrorising the school-children with threats of hellfire and damnation—Franju changes perspective to peer through a high cobwebbed window to introduce the Abbé Mouret as he gravely celebrates Mass in an empty church where he is the only communicant. The same framing device, evoking what Franju once called 'a haunted void', is also used to introduce the scene in which Serge, still naive enough to believe in human charity, visits a dying peasant woman to offer her absolution and finds the house being torn to pieces by rapacious relatives hunting for her gold; and also (a hole in a door) to introduce Albine for the first time as she crouches half-hidden amid the foliage of Le Paradou.

The implication, however one cares to express it—physical presence and spiritual



absence, dichotomy between dream and reality—is clear; and it is given the final turn of the screw when, after achieving their perfect harmony of body and soul in *Le Paradou*, Serge and Albine are forced to separate. Wandering through the forest after making love, in a sudden thunderstorm which turns the great, verdant tree into a gaunt silhouette of menace, they come to a hole in the wall through which the lights of the village can be seen shining. As Albine begs Serge not to look, the church bell tolls, and Serge, brought face to face with his past, falls on his knees to beg forgiveness for his sin. ‘La mort va entrer par ce trou,’ Albine murmurs despairingly, and suddenly, framed like Lucifer in the gap, Archangias appears to summon Serge away from Albine, back to his haunted void.

Only now it is no longer quite void. In the last scene of the film, as Serge returns to his worship of the Virgin and stretches out his arms to her in supplication, the screen is filled by Albine’s image. Perhaps Franju’s most stunning departure from Zola is this identification of Albine with the Virgin, in a poetic affirmation of the triumph of fantasy over fact, of eternity over death. Three images suffice. First, the tender, hovering close-up of the Virgin’s exquisite, delicately-painted features emerging from their nest of straw as Serge unpacks the statue he has bought for his church with his own money (in Zola, the statue is in the church already). Dependent on this, the close-up of the old peasant woman on her death-bed, eyes staring and jaw gaping in a

flutter of feathers from her pillaged mattress; and the matching close-up of Albine, lifeless in her bower of lilies. An ugly death and a peaceful one, in which the Goya-esque agony of the old woman suggests the destiny that awaited Albine had she not become metamorphosed into beauty as immutable as that of the Virgin emerging fresh and untainted from her coffin of straw.

The scene of Albine’s death marks the definitive parting of the ways between Zola and Franju. Although Albine suffers the same exotic fate in both novel and film—expiring in a room filled with flowers—Zola is careful to add explanatory details. The Albine of the novel, for instance, carefully blocks up the cracks in doors and windows after filling her room with flowers, and then closes the heavy curtains on it; she dies, we are told, asphyxiated by the scent in the airless room. Franju offers no such explanation. His Albine simply wills to die. ‘Nous allons mourir,’ she confides softly to the first roses she picks; and she simply dies, from neglect by Serge, like the flowers Archangias angrily removes from a vase at the foot of the Virgin’s statue and which had died during Serge’s absence at *Le Paradou* in adoration of Albine.

One might, in fact, see *La Faute de l’Abbé Mouret* in terms of some strange vegetation myth, since Franju has given a pagan twist to Zola’s allegory of the Garden of Eden by having Albine die only to be reborn again. The opening image of the film, vividly shot by Marcel Fradet, is of a vast, rocky hillside sprinkled with dense

green trees and bushes. Subsequently the elements are sundered, with *Les Artaud* seen as a landscape of barren rocks and dry earth, *Le Paradou* as a haven of lush greenery. It does not take a great effort of imagination to see Albine as the goddess Diana, the great tree as the sacred grove sheltering the Golden Bough, and Mouret and Archangias as the rival priests fighting for guardianship—or possession—of the secret. The transformation of the garden from lush paradise to gaunt prison, too, is reminiscent of the ritual death of summer; and is echoed by Albine’s murder of the flowers, to be reborn again as she is.

Is this symbolism conscious or unconscious? Difficult to say, since it is a natural consequence of the alliance between Franju’s private vision of the world as a place of marvels, and Zola’s endless catalogue of botanical and zoological phenomena which serves as a florid bolster to his more prosaic narrative. It isn’t, in any case, necessary, since the story of Serge and Albine is now pure Franju: a story which weaves the liberation from pain and suffering of *Les Yeux sans Visage*, the triumph of fantasy over reality of *Thomas l’Imposteur*, the vision of love enduring of *Judex*, into a strange, timeless fable which one might describe, to borrow from Blake again, as a marriage of heaven and hell. ■

‘*La Faute de l’Abbé Mouret*’. Left: Gillian Hills and Francis Huster. Above: Albine in her bower of lilies.



David Robinson

They were shooting on the first floor. The set was a shabby bed-sitter, and one could only speculate whether the rubbed dun-coloured wallpaper had been devised by the art people or inherited from the last inhabitant. Certainly the grey and tousled bed looked more like something left behind than anything that could be wilfully created. The first set-up required a very fat, very bald man (George Silver: 'Do you know he owns a fifth of the Wimpy bars in England?') said the press lady) to sit beside the fireplace and give himself a fix, watched by Janice Rule. Frears asked him if he was sure he remembered the routine for binding his arm with a piece of rubber tubing. Silver said he did, solemnly and deliberately went through his performance a couple of times; and then the shot was done. At that moment the wind got up and began to whip noisily at the plastic covering the windows so that Christian Wangler could not record anything. 'See what I mean about studios?' said Frears.

Frears is 29 (born in Leicester; Gresham's School; law tripos at Cambridge). From repertory he went to the Royal Court as an assistant director, then was Karel Reisz' assistant on *Morgan*. After that he was Albert Finney's assistant on *Charlie Bubbles* and Lindsay Anderson's on *If . . .* Between *Charlie Bubbles* and *If . . .* Memorial Productions, who had produced both films, helped him to make a short, *The Burning*, filmed in Morocco. A fantasy about the day of revolution in South Africa, it was an accomplished, edgy, highly atmospheric work.

From this Frears went on to make television films, including part of a series called *Parkyn's Patch*; and it was at this time that he met Neville Smith, with whom he wrote *Gumshoe*. Smith is a 30-year-old Liverpoolian with a lean solemn face and a line in deadpan comedy. After politics and history at Hull University, he became an actor, mostly in television series; then began to write for television. Ken Loach directed a Wednesday Play about a football club, *The Golden Vision*, and will direct *After a Lifetime*, loosely based on the experiences of Smith's father, who is a labourer. Smith is also working on a film script for Loach.

Gumshoe came out of Frears' and Smith's shared enthusiasm for Bogart and Raymond Chandler movies. The hero, Eddie Gimley, is a Liverpool small-time club entertainer and fantasist, also fixed on the Bogart image. Between dreams of playing Las Vegas, he inserts a small-ad in the local paper offering his services as a private detective. He is surprised to be hired at once; and shocked and thrilled to find himself in possession of a gat and a grand. The fantasies suddenly become a reality of gangsters, corpses, ambushes in every room, *femmes fatales* and street pursuits; but all translated into the familiar and mundane terms of Liverpool bus services, old age pensioners and the local fire brigade. Gimley's own brother and sister-in-law turn out to be concerned in crime; and their nefarious activity involves narcotics and (recalling the preoccupations of *The Burning*) sanctions-busters.

It is the sort of direct narrative script that depends entirely on the imaginative projection of the reader/realiser. Albert Finney

GUMSHOE

After location work in Liverpool, the *Gumshoe* unit had moved to London to shoot interiors in a row of three condemned houses in Regent Square, near King's Cross. The houses now looked rather bizarre; the only survival of the square's early Victorian residential heyday, they stood proudly isolated among the muddle of council flats and little factories. The façades had been painted up to glossy pristine elegance, though the windows were blinded with opaque plastic. From an upper window hung a great black banner which had something to do with the lighting, but looked more dramatic. Once inside the front doors, the illusion collapsed. The ground floor was still littered with squalid evidence of the house's last commercial tenancy: a trade counter, tatters of linoleum, a 1966 calendar. Elsewhere in the house there was an Alice quality. Up the stairs, behind doors of uniform peeling seediness, you might find anything: a psychiatrist's consulting room; a theatre manager's flashy little windowless office; a flatlet, a bed-sitter—all run up by the Art Department. With a full film unit and equipment, the building seemed likely to burst, with dreadful pile-ups of people on the narrow stairs.

Stephen Frears admitted that when he began his first feature he was convinced that this was the only way to ensure authenticity. Now he was not so sure. The difference in cost was negligible; the art people did the place over just as they created sets in the

studio; and anyway some of the rooms would have to be reproduced later in the studio, when the space had proved too cramped for cameras. He thought next time he would try to work in a studio from the start.

liked it, and wanted to play the gumshoe—which alone accounts for the surprising ease with which it was set up. Writing began in January 1970; a deal was done in August; shooting began in October. Instead of the project being hawked around in the usual way, the script was sent simultaneously to ten distributors who were all told that it was on offer to the rest. Columbia took eight hours to decide; and did not jib at an untried director as part of a deal which included Finney.

It was natural that Memorial, Finney's own company, should produce the film. (The name is derived tortuously from the Albert Memorial, and maybe has some connection with the double M initials of Finney's partner in Memorial, Michael Medwin.) The objects of Memorial are less profit than the possibility of promoting interesting original work. Apart from some theatre enterprises (though they turned down the chance to be associated with *Oh! Calcutta!*) and their three feature films to date, *Charlie Bubbles*, *If...* and *Spring and Port Wine*, they have helped several young directors. As well as supporting *The Burning*, they produced Paul Joyce's over-long short, *The Engagement*, and backed Tony Scott's *Loving Memory*.

The excitement of directing your first feature apparently soon wears off. 'Why *am* I doing this?' said Frears, whose favourite joke pose is mock-cynical resignation. 'It's just all work. *Work*. And all these people. *Why* do you need sixty? You're so responsible for them all. And they all expect you to know *everything*. They came to me yesterday with three watches. "Which one should the actress wear?" I told them, "Ask her." They all want you to decide, but I think it should be a democratic sort of creation. It's better to ask them "What do *you* think...?"' The only good thing about this crisis in British movies is that you can choose your people. I've got a marvellous unit—every one of them.'

By this time the flapping plastic had been fixed and the 'fix' shot had been made. The next scene was the one that follows it in the script, with George Silver on the bed and Janice Rule talking to him. The Bogart references become clear. Janice Rule's taut, mature beauty makes her the perfect Chandler *femme fatale*; and Silver is a natural for the Greenstreet part. 'I found him in his own restaurant in Liverpool,' Frears said. 'Do you know he owns a fifth of the Wimpy bars in England. *A fifth*.' Mr. Silver himself is a very courteous gentleman, extremely conscientious about his work on the film, clearly thoroughly enjoying all the attention, if apprehensive about seeing his own rushes.

In as far as you can guess anything from the outside of a camera, it looked as if Christopher Menges' photography would capture the arid look of bare walls and blank doors of a Forties gangster film; at least in the interiors, though inevitably it will be in colour. Menges, now an outstanding lighting cameraman—a recent feature was *Kes*—as well as a director in his own right (he recently produced and directed a much-admired documentary about a fit-up circus) was regretting that it was always necessary to work with colour. 'I've done too much pretty work lately.'

Finney himself wasn't working that day,



Janice Rule and George Silver. Albert Finney playing private eye on a Liverpool bus.

but he and Anouk Aimée were wrapped up and shivering with the rest of the unit in the grim cellar that had been turned into a temporary canteen. (British film people are at least troupers.) Evidently he responds strongly to the Gumshoe character—'I liked Bogart movies too. I saw them all the time when I was a kid.' He talked about the division in his work between 'personality' exploitation, which he hates and which he

felt was what he did in *Tom Jones*, and 'real' acting; and is prepared to agree that maybe his resentment of the 'personality' side could have led him to a too positive—if unconscious—suppression of charm in roles like *Two for the Road*.

'By the way,' said the associate producer, as they were packing up for the day: 'Did you know that George Silver owns a fifth of the Wimpy bars in England?'



London Festival



With feature films from seventeen countries, the 1970 London Festival promised an eclectic programme, juxtaposing works by long established directors (Buñuel, Kurosawa, Bergman, Ray, Wajda), younger but no less acclaimed directors (Truffaut, Bertolucci, Chabrol, Franju, Skolimowski, Rouch, Olmi), comparatively recent discoveries like Yoshida, Jires, Herzog and Gaál, with a number of first features by new directors. Sadly, and with the distinguished exception of Barbara Loden, the newcomers proved considerably less exciting than the old hands: Herman Melville's magnificent story only just managed to shine through the pedestrian direction of Anthony Friedmann's *Bartleby*; Luis Carlos Barreto's *Masters of the Land* and Jens Jørgen Thorsen's *Quiet Days in Clichy* jumped respectively on the fashionable bandwagons of *cinema nuovo* and slapstick pornography, to the detriment of both; and Pasolini proved the most prevalent, least assimilated influence, his pigs and cannibals casting an obliterating shadow over Liliana Cavani's *Cannibals* and Carlos Saura's *Garden of Delights*.

Many of the London films have already been reviewed from other European festivals; others were screened too late for SIGHT AND SOUND's inconveniently early press date. Wajda's *Landscape After Battle*, Bergman's *Fårö Document*, *The Spider's Strategy* and *The Conformist*—two films that ensure Bertolucci a triumphant place among the world's great film-makers—fall within this category, and we hope to write about these and any other films of exceptional interest in a subsequent issue. The reviews that follow are not intended as a comprehensive report on London's 14th Film Festival, but rather as an appreciative record of highlights of the first ten days.

Barbara Loden/Wanda

You never know about actors when they decide to become directors—and least of all when they begin by directing themselves in a vehicle. The temptations to applied monomania are immense, and if the star/director manages to avoid the obvious pitfall of hogging all the limelight himself, there is always the subtler trap of backing into the limelight, like Olivier in *Three Sisters*, giving one of those apparently muted, self-sacrificing performances which nevertheless manage constantly to distract one from whatever is going on centre stage. To set against these unappealing images of the actor-director there has been *Charlie Bubbles*, and now there is *Wanda*.

Wanda (Academy/Connoisseur) must have been if anything a more difficult feat to bring off than *Charlie Bubbles*. In *Charlie Bubbles* Albert Finney has cast himself in the central role, but it is the still centre of unspoken despair around which the film revolves. In *Wanda*, on the other hand, Barbara Loden (who wrote the original screenplay as well as directing) casts herself as the central character in a picaresque tale, so that the whole film depends on what she does rather than merely what she is. Moreover, it is a character calculated, one might think, to lure an actor into excess. Wanda is a slut, and a slob, and a drab. But sexy withal. And in many ways pathetic: there is more than a hint of Cabiria and her nights. What a field-day it could be for a really big performer giving a really big performance. Especially one of those Oscar-type performances in which the performer goes seemingly to the utmost limit of deglamorisation but still keeps us very much aware of the wheels going round, of the technical distance between the character we see on the screen and the still appreciably glamorous actor.

None of that from Miss Loden. Her Wanda is so true it really hits you between the eyes. She is from the start one of those

hopeless people who just cannot contrive to get themselves together. No one really wants to be saddled with her, and no wonder. She is not ill-natured; rather the reverse. But we know exactly what she is like from the opening sequence, in which she pulls a stained coverlet over the unmade bed of her nature and gets herself somehow—late, of course—to the courthouse where her husband's proceedings to divorce her are being heard. No, she has no objections. No, she cannot deny any of the things he says about her. No, by and large she thinks the kids will be better off with her husband and the woman he is now living with. So be it: exit Wanda from their lives and from what little security and continuity she has known.

The rest of the film tells of her wanderings, which consist of tagging along with one man after another, going wherever they take her, doing more or less whatever they want her to do, and when one drops her waiting passively for the next. She is, absolutely, the woman as object: the militant ladies of America will no doubt be very indignant about her plight. But, as Miss Loden very reasonably suggests in the film, there is clearly nothing else to be done with her. If men use her, it is because she has no notion of how to use herself; she doesn't even know what for.

Her first pick-up, having tried to sneak off in the morning before she is awake, manages neatly to lose her when she gets out of the car for a snack. The second, whose strange affair with her occupies the central section of the film, turns out to be almost as lost as she is, and to need her as much as she needs him. He is a small-time, and at that ludicrously unsuccessful, crook, whose dreams of a breakthrough are centred on an idiotically ill-conceived bank-robbery (an attempt to pit the techniques of Bonnie and Clyde against modern technology). It inevitably ends in disaster, which Wanda is spared only because she is too incompetent even to find her way to the bank with the getaway car in time. The third man is a serviceman on the make who comes in, to his great surprise, for the instinctive emotional backlash of the mishap at the bank. But as we see Wanda, still

numb, being passively included in the glum jollifications of another mixed party in another run-down bar, it is clear that nothing has really changed, and nothing ever will.

The performance is extraordinary, but even more extraordinary is the way it remains within the close-knit texture of the film as a whole. As an actress Miss Loden may well have learned a thing or two from being married to and on occasion directed by Elia Kazan. But as a film-maker she has little or nothing in common with him. The film is stylistically very unassuming, shot with almost documentary simplicity (originally in 16 mm). But it is paced, after a shaky opening three minutes, with splendid confidence, and captures with unfailing vividness the grimy urban scene and if anything even grimmer and more down-at-heel semi-industrialised countryside in which the action takes place. Nor is it, on the performance level, altogether a one-woman band: everyone else is good, and Michael Higgins, who plays Wanda's principal man, is extraordinary. The film is often very funny, and finally very sad, but it touches above all by its steadfast refusal to ask for sympathy, to show its heroine as anything other than the completely impossible mess she is. An astonishing debut, and one which surely cannot be just a flash in the pan.

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

Claude Chabrol/Le Boucher

Around the midpoint of Claude Chabrol's *Le Boucher* a schoolteacher, Mlle. Hélène (Stéphane Audran), is conducting a party of her pupils through the caves of the Dordogne. Though Cro-Magnon Man who inhabited them was, by comparison, a primitive beast, she reminds them, it is to his ability to survive that they owe their existence. The irony of the film is that Mlle. Hélène fails to note the implications of her own wise counsel: that we must embrace the beast in us or die.

Chabrol, as always, is concerned with the ways in which the primitive erupts through the conventional; in this case, in crimes of passion which tear apart the social fabric. He distinguishes two contrary forces in that passion. The primordial instinct to love or possess, which preserves the race, and which connects Cro-Magnon Man and the schoolchildren, is, when frustrated, the same instinct which will destroy it. It is not accidental that there stands in the village square of Trémolat, outside the quiet school building where Mlle. Hélène lives and teaches, a huge war memorial guarded by chains and marked off at each corner by a gunshell. In the same way the village butcher, Popaul (Jean Yanne), rebuffed politely in love by Mlle. Hélène, keeps vigil outside her window at night, a menacing sentinel.

What do we mean 'embrace the beast'? Chabrol warns of the power of the instinct for survival and of the curious forms it takes. There is little retreat from it possible even in the most sophisticated societies. It is the force which provokes the urbane husband of *La Femme Infidèle* to strike down his wife's lover; the same force drives her to hide his guilt in order to preserve her family. It is the possessive force which twists the restless triangle of *Les Biches* until one of the three is

expelled by murder. It is the force which persuades Charles Duchaussoy in *Que la Bête Meure* to give up love for the satisfaction of avenging his slaughtered son, and once he has realised that the beast is in all of us, to give up life too.

Mlle. Hélène of course, in her own cool way, is as desperately concerned to survive as anyone. She takes no lovers, despite her affection for the butcher, since she has had an unhappy affair ten years ago. Now she has retired to the country, and her school and her pupils are her family. In this partial way she serves tradition and continuity, and provides her own weak link in the chain from Cro-Magnon Man. On her own, she practises yoga. It is, as far as Chabrol is concerned, a retreat as destructive as the crimes of passion it provokes. At a quiet woodland picnic, Mlle. Hélène sweetly but firmly turns down Popaul's tentative offer to kiss her. 'I would say nothing but I ask you not to do it.' At a later picnic on the steep banks overlooking the Dordogne blood drips arrestingly on to a pupil's sandwich. The victim's hand projects over the cliff edge above their heads. Someone has begun to murder the village girls, cutting them up outrageously with a knife. The next victim is the young bride whose wedding we attended at the beginning of the film, a function at which Hélène and Popaul first got to know one another.

Functions, both social and physical, play a large part in the Chabrol bestiary. Village life is carefully and affectionately described: the wedding with its familiar figures, the drunk, the exhibitionist, the simpleton; the banal but unpatronisingly observed speeches; the gossip in the butcher's shop where an elderly man distinguishes between war and murder; the funeral procession and the graveside ritual.

The sense of history is strong too. Starting in the present the film works backwards to reveal links with the past. Mlle. Hélène has been three years at the school; it is ten years since her unhappy affair; Popaul had been fifteen years in the army—Algeria, Indo-China. Hélène rehearses Popaul and the children in a formal 18th-century dance for which she manages to get Popaul to dress up—though she characteristically remains in modern clothes. Finally she leads us back to the origins: a tour through the subterranean haunts of our primitive ancestors. It is at this point that the killings begin.

And then of course Chabrol's favourite ritual, eating. It's part of his witty humanism that he loves revelations at the table. Not a film is without some central eating scene. Here we open with the wedding banquet. The butcher is asked to carve the exquisite but 'bleu' hunk of beef. Hélène laughs at his professional pride. Does she like beef, he suddenly asks her, as they walk back later to the schoolhouse. He is obsessed by blood, and his obsession, we are to learn, only leaves him in her presence. But Popaul is not all beast himself. His affection for Hélène is genuine. He is respectable—boorish maybe, but eager to please. He brings Hélène a gift of bottled cherries and thumps the jar down on her books. But it's a gift tenderly meant. Hélène by now suspects him. While he eats the cherries out of mere appetite and willingness to consolidate their togetherness, she eats compulsively in an effort to keep horror at bay by this trivial and commonplace action. Popaul's banalities are less a measure

of his character than an effort to hide his passion for her. He's rather like the psychopath played by Mario David in that widely underrated early film *Les Bonnes Femmes*, smiling and joking his way foolishly to a climax which leaves him desperate and ashamed. The deep feeling obliquely channelled in the early film is here under surer control.

Hélène knows of his guilt but cannot divine that the reason for it is herself. It is night. As she would not once give in to his loving assault, so now she barricades in vain the doors and windows of the schoolhouse against his lethal attack. When he has told her everything, she again rejects him by closing her eyes. He turns the knife on himself, persuaded that the beast must finally die. When she steps forward to help him her foot and leg glide between his splayed limbs in a tragic parody of the love she might have offered him. 'Embrassez-moi' are his last words to her; and now at last she does kiss him, acknowledging too late a lesson which, for a teacher, she was slow to learn. In obedience to Chabrol's conviction that appearances constantly belie the truth, the teacher it is who has turned butcher. This is a dazzling addition to the work of a filmmaker who must now rank among the world's best.

GAVIN MILLAR

Jerzy Skolimowski/Deep End

Skolimowski's previous films all maintained a brittle tension between romanticism and cynicism, principally through the person of a questing, usually adolescent, hero unable—despite a succession of experiences revealing both the egotism and the utter separateness of other people—to suppress his expectation of a better world. They were at once a celebration of youthful energy and of a more mature disenchantment, alternately detached and wryly compassionate, with the director controlling the ebb and flow of audience sympathies as if the better to convince us of the absurdity of sharing his affection for his unreliable characters.

To this extent his hilarious *Deep End* runs true to form, while being—superficially—the most superficial of Skolimowski's films to date. *Le Départ* managed to endow Brussels with that same feeling of slightly unreal impersonality that had characterised the Warsaw of his Polish films; *Deep End*, made largely in Munich, takes the alienation process a stage further, being set in a London of his own creation, a city compounded in

'The Scavengers'



equal parts of swinging myth and squalid observation, garishly coloured discotheques and faceless smoke-stained streets, uneasily juxtaposed to produce a territory midway between fantasy and reality, a world of deceptively glittering surfaces with nothing to fulfil their tantalising promise. The hero this time is a fifteen-year-old, Mike, who gets his first job as an attendant at a public baths, where he is placed in charge of the men's section and initiated into the tricks of his trade by Susan, the provocatively sexy female attendant (Jane Asher).

Knowing ingénue and child-woman, she explains to the virgin Mike (John Moulder-Brown) that they can make a fortune by swapping sections from time to time ('Some women'll tip you ten bob, for nothing really, just for imagining things'); and this arrangement works until Mike discovers that Susan is using her time in his section to make love to the Humbert-like games master from his own former school. Slowly, not without encouragement, Mike becomes obsessed with her, his jealousy merely diversified when he learns she's also engaged to a rich and trendy man-about-town. He takes to following her everywhere like a faithful if somewhat obstructive puppy, and eventually bribes her into making love to him. But she abruptly decides to visit her fiancé when Mike proves unable to achieve a speedy consummation, and he accidentally kills her in the struggle to make her stay. The film closes on an image of Mike happily caressing Susan's body as it floats in the turquoise water of the pool, stained by the blood that trickles from her mouth and mingles with the red of her hair.

The ending is thematically consistent with Skolimowski's pervasive view of a greedy society in which people use and discard other people like objects and sex is equated with materialism. (Mike earns his first ten shillings when an outside peroxidised lady—Diana Dors dispensing ham and muscle with equal relish—clutches him to her bosom in a vice-like grip and delivers an orgasmic monologue about football.) Yet it is unsatisfying, not just because of its crude shock tactics but also because it echoes two of the film's clumsiest moments: a fantasy insert in which Mike holds Susan naked under the water, and a longer sequence in which he floats on top of a cardboard poster of a stripper who resembles her. These scenes seem intended to provide a single image of adolescent frustration, and their weakness lies in their explicitness, while Skolimowski's strength lies elsewhere: in ambiguous metaphors rather than precise similes, in mobile rather than static images, in surreal inconsequential details like the lone canoeist in the deserted pool, the fish-and-chip picnic on the edge of the springboard, or the Chinese hot-dog-vendor ritualistically bowing as he intones an interrogative 'mustard?'. As long as it cuts rapidly from scene to scene *Deep End* sustains its momentum; but it is knocked off balance each time Skolimowski attempts to round off a sequence with a wilfully significant image.

Yet between these heavy parentheses the film contains so much that is dazzlingly brilliant that it seems uncharitable to dwell on them. It is a kaleidoscope of primary colours, used to tip both characters and settings into the realm of caricature, but also used for the sheer visual pleasure they offer, as Skolimowski seems self-parodyingly to

acknowledge when—with the fat cashier squirting perfume into Susan's milkshake in the foreground—a roller-wielding hand appears in the background and proceeds to cover a wall with red paint. Equally exciting is the dazzling whiteness of the sequence in which Sue and Mike search for her missing diamond in an ice-bound field.

The many sudden, unexplained shifts of purpose and attitude show Skolimowski at his distinctive best; and in Jane Asher he has found an actress perfectly suited to his black romantic irony, capable of passing from inviting tenderness to nail-hard shrewishness without transition. Yet despite her unnervingly natural performance, despite the verbal and visual fireworks, the film's mixture of slapstick, caricature and grim moral comment does not always coalesce; with a pop score by Cat Stevens and a frenetically running hero, it seems intermittently to be exploiting the swinging genre on which it so caustically comments. Like the best baroque, it is memorable for a wealth of details and its depiction of a turbulent world in a state of perpetual motion; but being the best baroque, it fits uneasily into a linear structure with a beginning, middle and end, to say nothing of a moral.

JAN DAWSON

Shadi Abdelsalam/ The Night of Counting the Years

Shadi Abdelsalam, who made *The Night of Counting the Years*, was an art director on *Cleopatra*, mainly concerned with seeing that the barge she sat in, like the burnished throne, actually did burn on the water. After which he was art director on *Pharaoh*. You might suppose, therefore, that his first venture as a feature film director would be both pretty to look at and very Egyptian. Both of these it undoubtedly is, but unlike most art director's films, and most Egyptian films, it is decidedly more. It is about something other than its decors, and its Egyptianness is imaginative rather than merely technical.

What seems to have inspired Abdelsalam in the first instance, both for *The Night of Counting the Years* and for his accompanying short *The Eloquent Peasant*, is a vision of Ancient Egypt and its imaginative and cultural continuity with Egypt today. Both films seek to give expression to this vision, and do so in a remote and hieratic style which is like nothing else in the cinema except perhaps Mizoguchi. *The Eloquent Peasant* is a brief fable taken straight from an Ancient Egyptian papyrus, which Abdelsalam used in effect as a shooting script. It is one of those films in which every shot is a thing of beauty. But, astonishingly, it does not wallow in its visual qualities. Instead it moves slowly but inexorably forward, telling its tale of a robbed peasant's search for justice with just the right degree of gnomic mystery, as though we are in fact looking through a window suddenly opened on a vanished time and then, just as suddenly, closed.

The Night of Counting the Years is superficially nearer home, but only superficially. It purports to tell the story of how the bodies of the Pharaohs were rediscovered in the 1880s, hidden in a mountain near the Valley of the Kings, where they had been removed to escape the sacrilegious attentions of tomb-robbers. But most of the film, which



Funeral of a murder victim in 'Le Boucher'

was also written by Abdelsalam, is built round the interior drama of a young man who, on the death of his father, inherits the secret of the Pharaohs' resting-place, for centuries closely guarded by his tribe, and is then shocked, inexplicably even to himself, by seeing one of the mummies desecrated for the sake of the money its jewels can bring to support his impoverished people. The film follows him round during a day of reflection, punctuated with various encounters of mysterious import, until at last he decides to tell the government's expedition the secret, preserve the Pharaohs and bankrupt his own tribe.

Certainly the first thing one carries away from the film is its fantastic visual splendour—often individual, unforgettable shots, like that at the funeral of the old man in which purple petals are sprinkled on the earth until the whole screen has turned purple, or the approach of the young man to the temple walls, photographed directly from above so that he becomes the sole moving part in an exquisite pattern of golden stones. But that is art-director's filming, and were that all the film had to offer it would be a rather empty exercise. Even more striking is the way effects like these are used. There is always an electric tension between shot and shot, so that however long one shot is held we never lose the sense of dynamic continuity. And beneath the film's splendid surface there seems to be something more than is ever directly said; as Pinter once put it, 'below the words spoken, is the thing known and unspoken.'

The film has the air of being a ritual, and curiously enough, despite its lack of any direct sexual reference and its virtually all-male cast, an erotic ritual at that. How else to explain the strange intensity with which even the simplest, most apparently straightforward meetings in the film are invested? In evoking the spirit of Ancient Egypt Abdelsalam has found a weird and wonderful new language of his own. Perhaps to decipher it completely we need a new Rosetta Stone, but even without one we can be strangely moved, though we may not fully understand.

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

Ermanno Olmi/The Scavengers

With *The Scavengers*, Olmi returns to the theme of his first feature film, *Time Stood Still*, made eleven years ago. Once again an expert veteran accepts, teaches, and eventually loses the volatile young man who has become his partner, and once again the mountains provide a vital and imperturbable background. Filmed with almost placid simplicity, it's something of a retreat from the headlong pace both of Olmi's city subjects and of the increasingly sophisticated style that had culminated in the brutally flashing images of *One Fine Day*. On the other hand, the rich texture of Olmi's occasional panning shots across landscape has often served to remind us during the intervening years that he's a country boy at heart. His philanthropic curiosity nevertheless remains constant, and the frequent panoramas in *The Scavengers* resolve themselves time and again (with an eager rush of the telephoto lens) in the selection of urgent, purposeful human figures—a woodcutter gesticulating furiously with a gun, a girl running to her lover in the rain, a frantic motorcyclist with news of disaster.

The film begins, in fact, with one of those curiously detached yet hungrily probing visual swoops, curling itself out of the mountainside to pick out a trudging young soldier on his way home from the obscure and distant calamities of warfare (a title gives the year as 1945). 'It's a return to concrete things,' Olmi has commented on this retreat, 'a return to humanity, to a world which has already been discovered and which is clear and simple to everyone.' As it happens, however, rustic life proves anything but simple: Gianni's father has remarried, for a start, and his new wife is thirty years younger than himself. That this is a shattering severance with past allegiances is conveyed wordlessly by Olmi's customary selection of the uneasy fidgets and glances of his characters—the instinct for description of the indescribable that makes him one of the greatest of contemporary neo-realists. As in *I Fidanzati*, emotional gulfs are expressed in terms of silence; Olmi's

introverts seldom raise their voices.

Another major complication (and a familiar Olmi subject) is the question of employment. Gianni's girl, Elsa, has faithfully awaited his return, but the district offers no opportunities for them to earn enough to get married, while local bureaucracy shuts down an attempt by some of the villagers at private enterprise by tree-felling. Emigration seems the only course, and Gianni's brother is among the men who despondently adopt it. Olmi again uses understatement to show why Gianni doesn't; a beautifully observed little scene with Elsa's parents tugs gently at the ties keeping her to them and Gianni to her.

The answer to Gianni's predicament is unexpectedly presented in the arrival of Du, an irrepressible eighty-year-old who enlists him in the art (for such he aggressively claims it to be) of uncovering hoards of scrap metal from First World War battlefields and selling them to dealers for substantial amounts of cash. It's not what Elsa would call a respectable trade, and they have a row about it, but the old man is a fascinatingly persuasive partner with his talk of a kind of scrap-iron El Dorado hidden in the mountains, and Gianni throws himself completely into the work. The film then becomes a suspenseful comedy, as the two men unearth collections of live shells and defuse them by various means, incessantly accompanied by Du's anecdotes, asides, jokes, and warnings. Predictably enough, Gianni's investment in a portable mine-detector brings a flood of scorn from the old man ('So they have machines that can whistle now, like birds? Wonderful!'), and equally predictably the detector eventually proves its worth by revealing rich stores of military relics.

Each discovery has its own element of drama, like the invasion by a flock of sheep just when a particularly unstable bomb has been hauled up, and despite the casual behaviour of the two men Olmi constructs a quiet sense of cumulative menace until the tension at last finds its inevitably tragic release. An unfamiliar shell explodes in the hut of some fellow-scavengers, and the resultant scene of ruin is duplicated soon afterwards in the discovery of an underground cave in which uniformed corpses still cling to their rifles. Gianni decides that he has had enough of armaments, makes things up with Elsa (a tiny, delightful moment of reconciliation at her window) and becomes a labourer on a building site.

Olmi is concerned in *The Scavengers* with a dual response to warfare, a capitalist/socialist confrontation in which the only reward is a hardening of the arteries. The old man, an expert in military history as well as in bomb disposal, has the kind of rakish independence Olmi would clearly like us to admire. On the other hand, the gauche good nature and persistence of Gianni are viewed with the same affection that Olmi brought to his young heroes in *Time Stood Still*, *Il Posto* and *I Fidanzati*. Although inclined to be a trifle hasty with his womenfolk, the youth has a worthy sense of responsibility and his decision to work at construction rather than continuing to toy with the relics of destruction seems both sensible and morally correct. He also enjoys the prospect of matrimonial security, a state much

scorned by Du but hitherto celebrated by Olmi himself.

The parting of the ways between the older and the younger man, a silent scene which could have been maudlin if held a fraction longer, contains regret not so much at the break-up of a partnership as at the departure of a clown whose part in the action, never entirely relevant, has now terminated. But the clown has the last word, as usual, and it is one of his songs that echoes over the mountains as the film's concluding shot withdraws from the world of men. War will doubtless continue to roam endlessly from one country to another, but Olmi is cheerfully confident that landscapes, and their inhabitants, will manage to survive.

PHILIP STRICK

Akira Kurosawa/*Dodeska-Den*

A Kurosawa film without its scowling superhuman seems a contradiction in terms, but *Dodeska-Den*, Kurosawa's first production for the new company he shares with Ichikawa, Kobayashi and Kinoshita, deals with a shanty-town society in which leadership is unknown. The chaos that once was kept in check by Mifune's glare is now the dominant environment, an all-too-tangible thicket of rubbish that encloses a mob of wretches with nothing but their small store of courage to keep them going. Kurosawa examines these tiny sparks of heroism through a collection of intermittent biographies: the young tram-driver daily going the rounds in his invisible vehicle, the exhausted girl struggling to keep house for her drunken stepfather, the sepulchral zombie with a face of inexpressible sorrow who padlocks his shack as if to protect a fortune, the ageing tramp who entertains his son with elaborate descriptions of a palatial house being built for them both, and the lame little businessman with a nervous tic that periodically halts him in his tracks for a programme of appalling convulsions. Emphasising the classicism of this narrative structure is the crowd of nattering women at the local pump, whose contorted expressions, mirroring every mood from horror to prurience, follow the pattern set by a long line of Kurosawa's peasant commentators.

Rubbish dumps are much overworked symbols, and it is accordingly with some misgivings that one ventures into Kurosawa's garbage world. Despite his own previous expedition into the lower depths, however, Kurosawa comes upon the territory as if it had never been charted before, with an inventive and engaging enthusiasm accounted for, perhaps, by the fact that this is his first colour film (discounting a plume of smoke in *High and Low*). That his use of colour is naturalistic for much of the time makes his departure into surrealistic shades for points of crisis all the more effective. As delirium overtakes a couple of sufferers from food-poisoning, there is an oppressive glare of reds and greens through the skeletal mounds of refuse, themselves become theatrically insubstantial in the height of fever. Such a departure from strict naturalism in the application of colour is of course nothing new to Japanese cinema, but it adds a genuinely

disturbing dimension to Kurosawa's parable; that the fantastic should be added to his study of fantasies, further embroidered by the livid emerald and blue faces of his sufferers, seems an indulgence both acceptable and, by the time it has reached its most extreme form, curiously logical.

At the other end of the spectrum, Kurosawa turns colour into comedy with the running joke of the two drunks who can only identify their houses and their wives by the prevailing hues of the decor. The settings of *Dodeska-Den*, for all their simplicity, are indeed the most striking that Kurosawa has used; colour seems to have brought out the more strongly his feeling for contrasting textures, while he has some remarkable long-shots in which tiny figures are isolated against the sweep of a long low barrier marking the boundary of the slums. His unworried intermingling of lurid studio shots with the daylight locations beside Tokyo Bay implies a confidence in his audience that is appropriately reminiscent of John Ford's similar challenge in *Seven Women*. Like the dagger in *Rashomon* or the bridge in *High and Low*, Kurosawa's symbols have always enjoyed several layers of interpretation, but *Dodeska-Den* is possibly his first film in which the surfaces are so brittle and the inferences so deep.

The Chorus aside, each of the units in the film provides a different perspective on the complexities of loyalty. The interdependence of the tram-driver and his mother, both staunchly preserving the illusion of his vital duties and each secretly worrying about the other's well-being, is illustrated in more extreme form by the tramp with his endless house-building tales sweetly and tolerantly endured by the small boy who forages for them, falls ill and dies, and is buried in a tiny white carton. In both cases we are involved in their fantasies: we hear the tram-car, and we see the bizarre architecture of the house. By contrast, a more delicate, Ozu-like manner is used for the tale of the girl who tries to kill a delivery-boy rather than reveal that her drone-like guardian has raped her. The most tragic sequences, in which Kurosawa once again celebrates Dostoevsky, reveal the betrayal of the man with the haunted face by his now repentant wife and her desolate discovery that the shock proved fatal.

Slightly outside the pattern is the community's elder statesman, a gentle cousin of the omniscient Mifune, who acts as father confessor to the neighbourhood miscreants and floors them by taking their exploits seriously. Visited by a burglar, he is at pains to hand over all the money in the house; a would-be suicide is cured by the prompt gift of poison, while a lout swinging his sword at passers-by in the rain is stunningly silenced by the old man's sympathetic offer to change places with him. The role would fit Kurosawa himself, in that it places the other characters' dreams in their context; more importantly, it is a role which, like the closing shot of the film in which colours play across innumerable paintings of crowded tram-cars, recognises its own impotence when confronted by a daily infinity of pathetic masquerades.

PHILIP STRICK

IN THE PICTURE



Pécs

The annual Hungarian Film Week at Pécs was held on the eve of last November's Hungarian Party Congress, and so found the cinema at large in a somewhat nervy state. No one knew what organisational set-up might exist after the congress; whether the present arrangement of four creative groups which has worked so admirably since 1963 would continue; or whether the young, critical but distinctly minority cinema which has attracted so much attention would continue to be subsidised at the present level.

A conference on the 'crisis' resulted in a good deal of evasive talk, amongst which however could be discerned a debate between the leftist young who feel that the Hungarian cinema still lacks complete political frankness and that artists must still (a favourite phrase) 'write between the lines'; and the more conservative element which severely criticises those directors and writers who choose to work in 'parables' (in Hungarian, *parabola*: the word was apparently introduced into the debate by Jancsó after *The Confrontation* and has become a cult term used either in attack or defence of the new Hungarian cinema).

The general nerviness has been reflected in the poor critical reception of a group of films which attempt to extend even further the line of historical criticism I remarked in an earlier article (Spring 1970). Istvan Gaál's *The Falcons*, Zsolt Kázdai-Kovács' *Temperate Zone* and Ferenc Kardós' *A Mad Night* all have in common that they identify a political mentality which—rather than a convenient myth of historical accident—would account for the Rákosi era and the Stalinist Fifties. It is, you might think, a perfectly wholesome line of Socialist criticism, but perhaps it is still a little too close to home. Earlier, Jancsó's *The Confrontation* suffered similar critical attack.

None of these films in fact quali-

fied or was selected for the Pécs Film Week, whose entries were in the event fairly non-committal. Perhaps the selectors felt an obligation to the older generation: there would be no other very clear reason to include, for instance, Zoltan Várkonyi's *Face to Face*, a lumbering effort to keep up with the new generation, making a dull cliché out of the formula of analysing past guilt (Second World War) from the perspective of twenty-five years after. Zoltan Fábri's *The Toth Family* is a satirical comedy based on a stage play in turn based on a popular novel. Félix Máriássy's *The Imposters* is more interesting

as a stylistic experiment, though it never fully resolves its indecision between realism and satirical stylisation in its account of a petty dictator washed up on the wave of reaction after the collapse of the 1919 Republic of Councils. *Journey Around My Skull*, by György Révész, another director who dates from the Fifties, is an over-emphatic, intermittently vulgar pursuit of deliberate avant-gardism, based upon the short stories, and the actual clinical experiences while undergoing an operation for a brain tumour, of the humorist Frigyes Karinthy.

Alongside these four films by directors of the Fifties' generation were four by the post-1963 school. I have already written about Sándor Simó's *Besppectacled* and Imre Gyöngyössi's *Palm Sunday*. The latter, uneven and unbalanced, but uncompromisingly individualistic in its translation to film of elements of a folk culture, was the only real contender for the prize for the best film; and won it. After *Ten Thousand Suns*, Ferenc Kósa's *Judgment* is disappointing: in the outcome he derives nothing more profound than a Hollywood costume adventure from the story of the sixteenth century peasant revolutionary György Dosza. Pál Zolnay's *The Face*, effortfully reconstructing the experiences of a young Communist resistance worker in the Second World War, ties itself in knots in its pursuit of stylishness.

But if the competitive films hardly came up to the high standards of recent Hungarian cinema, the organisers managed to open and close the event with two films of real distinction. István Szabó's *Love Film* was reviewed from the

Venice Festival, and stands up very well to second viewing. It is still (despite some trimming) much too long: the director's fault is less indulgence than a fear that audiences will not get his point. The film records a love affair that starts in childhood, survives the war, the Fifties and 1956, but then fades into a nostalgia of recollected affection after the girl emigrates to France. The film's uniqueness is the way it reveals the interdependence of the great events of history and the trivia of people's emotional every day; the authenticity with which it pinpoints the concrete surface evidences of memory and feeling.

Love (the similarity of title to Szabó's film is confusing) marks a triumphant return to form of Károly Makk, who through the Sixties never quite seemed able to sustain the promise of his precocious work in the 1950s (*Liliomfi*, *The House Beneath the Rocks*). His new film is based on a short story by Tibor Déry and admirably reproduces Déry's method (cf. *Nikki*, *The Story of a Dog*) of concealing a hard edge of tragedy beneath an appearance of tender sentiment.

In *Love* the mind of an old, bedridden lady floats among rose-hued memories of the world before the First World War, while her daughter-in-law feeds her with stories of her only surviving son's triumphs as a movie director in America. In reality he is a political prisoner (for these are the Rákosi Fifties). The daughter-in-law's efforts to conceal her own privations become harder. The old lady dies. The son is released. The couple are reunited. The content, as story, is slight, and the structure casual; but it is all tightly integrated by Makk's style and control and the impeccable performances of Lili Darvas (the widow of Ferenc Molnar, who has for many years lived and acted in the United States), Mari Torocsik (archetypal Hungarian heroine of the Fifties) and Iván Darvas (who like Déry himself had first-hand experience of prison life after '56).

DAVID ROBINSON

György Révész's 'Journey Around My Skull'



The Great Medicine Ball Caravan

The success of *Woodstock* is siring a line of variations: unstructured, cinéma-vérité documentaries trying to capture the mystique and myths of the pop subculture. One, *The Great Medicine Ball Caravan*, has already thrown up an intriguing question for the hip world, about whether a company like Warner Brothers can be manipulated from within or whether a lot of people who thought they could use the media were themselves used. In other words, is *Caravan* far-out exploitation, or did 150 freaks, rock musicians, bus trippers, groupies, commune members and Beautiful People manage to 'seize' François Reichenbach's movie from within?

Warner Brothers, which hasn't finished assessing the *Woodstock*

profit, put up a million dollars, and on August 5th, 1970, Reichenbach, a French crew, two Warners doctors, a lawyer, paymasters and the hand-picked 150 set out from San Francisco for New York and points east (Isle of Wight Festival) in a pilgrims' progress of 20 psychedelic painted buses, trucks (one carrying a canvassed helicopter for special sequences), trailers and caravans. With WB advance men smoothing out civic leaders and police chiefs, this Felliniesque hallucination crossed America in three weeks, giving free rock concerts at an Indian reservation and such photogenic sites as Zion National Park and the Grand Canyon.

Reichenbach set up the deal last spring with Fred Weintraub, the Warners vice-president responsible for the *Woodstock* pick-up, and Tom Donahue, rock critic and former San Francisco disc jockey. (Both Weintraub and Donahue are included in *Esquire's* October 1970 feature on the behind-the-scenes 'heavy hundred' who control rock.) Reichenbach himself is an old America hand, dating back beyond *L'Amérique Insolite* to his art dealer years. The caravan film was originally to have ended in the apotheosis of the planned Toronto superfestival, announced but never carried out by John Lennon.

No one on the caravan was paid an official salary, but all expenses, food, medical supplies, were picked up by the WB accountants traveling in their own van. Although little direct publicity was attempted, reportedly to avoid mass gatherings that would arouse the elder citizenry, a *Rolling Stone* magazine writer went along as publicist and enthusiastic reports appeared in the hip media. That is, until *The Village Voice*, the New York doyen of the underground press, began running a long-winded, repetitive but ultimately enlightening eyewitness account of the caravan trek. 'The whole journey-movie is a strange combination of pilgrimage and public relations stunt,' wrote Ron Rosenbaum. 'Each aspect is a somewhat legitimate front for the other, as things often are in the mirrored

worlds called "country-culture" and "hip capitalism". The people making the pilgrimage believe they are using the hip capitalists for their own ends: making a consciousness-raising movie that will turn on straight America with its energy and love.'

Other media picked up the story, and a slightly different picture came into focus. Reichenbach and his Frenchmen, it was argued, understood nothing of American tribal living and were filming their own prejudices, a caricature of 1967-vintage Haight-Ashbury hippiedom with rock, acid and nude swimming, while studiously avoiding the struggle of radical America. Politics were banned (no political slogans on any of the buses); dissidents were threatened with having their promised plane tickets to England cancelled. 'Only the sacred, the smiling and the safe was sanctified; the profane, the dangerous, the crazy was driven off,' wrote Rosenbaum.

In retaliation, caravaners began an artful con game with the Frenchmen. When Reichenbach asked for retakes, Hog Farm 'family' members would parody what they had just done for the cameras, or they would start snapping Instamatics at the cameramen when the Arriflexes got too close. Besides the Reichenbach crew, a UCLA crew was making a film of the filming; and, almost in self-defence, many of the 150 had their own movie cameras to film the movie-making. 'At the critical mass level of media technology,' concluded Rosenbaum, 'the unnatural will be absolutely natural, all filming will in effect cancel itself out.'

Reichenbach is now cutting the film in Paris. Another trip film (this one a flying caravan) is *Joe Cocker—Mad Dogs and Englishmen*, financed and produced by A & M Records. Directed by newcomer Pierre Adidge (cameraman on a Creedence Clearwater Revival TV documentary), this film records the cross-country tour aboard a charter plane of the English soul singer, 42 musicians, singers, girl friends, children and a dog from Los Angeles' Santa Monica civic

auditorium to Fillmore East in New York and the rock halls in between. Yet another rock documentary is the Albert and David Maysles picture on the Rolling Stones, made a year ago. Tentatively titled *Gimme Shelter* (the Stones' lead song in the movie) the Maysles brothers' film may be headed for a Columbia release.

AXEL MADSEN

Pesaro 1970

Pesaro has this advantage over the grander shows of Cannes, Venice and Berlin that it is not absolutely dependent on the quality of individual films shown. Its purpose is to be indicative of new trends in world cinema and to provide a forum for their discussion. In this context it does not matter too much if none of the new trends has come up with a masterpiece, provided that the selection can claim to be genuinely representative of what is going on and the debates manage to get to grips with concrete problems and do not fly off into areas of interstellar speculation. The ideological cast of the Festival helps here in providing a basic common ground, and accounts for what has traditionally been one of the Festival's most positive features, its emphasis on new and combative cinemas in the Third World.

The success of Pesaro's formula has however depended to a great extent on the continuing validity of a particular set of assumptions, about the community of aims, interests and practice among independent or at least unestablished film-makers throughout the world. These assumptions are far less viable now than they were when the Festival was founded. Not only the 'new cinema' overall but also its various components—underground cinema, militant cinema, Latin-American cinema, etc.—are in a state of confusion. Political and aesthetic boundaries are constantly being redrawn. The kind of revamped neo-realism which could be relied on to provide an appropriate combination of stylistic directness, moderately leftist

content and reasonable production costs is now (fortunately) the exception, not the rule. But its disappearance has left a vacuum which is being filled from all sides by developments with which the Festival finds it hard to contend.

Different areas of film production are clearly going to be affected in different ways by the changing course of events. In the case of Latin America the operative factors are mostly external to the cinema itself. While the Cuban cinema consolidates itself, the other two major Latin-American cinemas, the Argentinian and the Brazilian, are being stifled by intense repression. With strongly national cinemas such as these the disaster strikes even those directors who leave to make films abroad. Witness the case of Glauber Rocha, whose second European film *Cabezas cortadas* confirms all the fears expressed by people who had seen *Der Leone have sept cabezas* at Venice.

Cabezas cortadas, shot in Spain as a Spanish-Brazilian co-production, gives the impression of an imagination totally disoriented by separation from its cultural sources. The type of symbolism which, in *Black God, White Devil* and *Antonio das Mortes*, appears as organically part of a complex, specifically Brazilian reality, here hangs in a void. Some sort of allegory is hinted at in the imagery, but the hints are instantly withdrawn, as if to defeat the possibility of simplistic interpretation. The result is a film which does not function at any of the levels at which it aspires to operate, and a sad decline from the disturbing richness of Rocha's earlier work.

By contrast the Cuban film at Pesaro, Julio Garcia Espinosa's *Tercer mundo, tercera guerra mundial*, is nothing if not concrete. *Tercer mundo* is in the first instance a film about the war in Vietnam, about the American bombing of the North and the resistance of the people. But it is not primarily a documentary or descriptive film. Rather it is an attempt to analyse, from the combined point of view of the Vietnamese and the Cubans themselves, the nature of the strategy directed by the Americans against the peoples of the Third World. According to Espinosa the film is designed to appeal more to the head than to the heart and is more for the already active politically than for the unaroused. In the logical rigour with which it unfolds its argument it achieves its purpose abundantly, and it was one of the few films which brought clarity rather than confusion into the debate.

The clarity of purpose of *Tercer mundo* was certainly not matched by any of the other explicitly political films at the Festival, from whatever source. There were indications, but only indications, of the development in Western Europe and the US of a new style of film-making activity which was more concerned, in Godard's phrase, with 'making films politically' than with simply treating a political

Catherine Deneuve and Delphine Seyrig in Jacques Demy's 'Peau d'Ane'





Director and star: John Wayne and Howard Hawks on 'Rio Lobo'

subject. But the premise of any such project is a common aim and activity between the makers of the film and the people about and for whom the film is made.

Neither *Il Contratto*, made by Ugo Gregoretti for the Italian Metalworkers Unions, nor *Ice*, made by Robert Kramer with the collaboration of his friends, was much of an advance in this or in any other direction. *Il Contratto* was a typical example of that style of going out to the people in order to find there a reflection of one's pre-existing ideological conceptions which the new film-makers most detest; while *Ice*, though having the doubtless positive feature of being made by a group for and about itself, suffered from a totally narcissistic fantasy self-identification of the group with the 'revolution' itself. It was only outside the Festival programme, at a showing of *Finally Got the News*, made by the (black) Detroit Revolutionary Union Movement with a certain, indeterminate collaboration from the Newsreel group, that one did, finally, get the news about what a political cinema can really be.

Outside the directly political field, the most exciting doubt of the Festival beyond any doubt was Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Katzelmacher*, also a group production and the second of no less than five films which this 24-year-old author has made, together with his 'anti-theatre' group from Munich, in the space of little more than a year.

Katzelmacher was first performed as a play by Fassbinder's group in 1967 and the way it has been recast as a film shows a clear but well-assimilated influence of Straub. The film's style is deliberately theatrical, but at the same time anti-dramatic. The number of locations is minimal, the camera is still and the actors recite monotonously towards it. The protagonists are a group of young people, living in a block of flats in a Munich suburb, whose life is disturbed by the arrival of a Greek immigrant worker on to whom they project their fantasies about im-

migrants as Communists, sex-maniacs and near-savages. The quiet but devastating exposure of this mindless racism, achieved through a systematic use of a Brechtian aesthetic distancing, is interspersed by moments of a gentle ironic lyricism. Finally one of the girls, the only member of the group to have been at all sympathetic to the Greek, decides to return with him to Greece—a fairy-tale ending with a cruel twist to it, for her vision of Greece as all beauty and sunshine is as false and as mystified as the opposite fantasy.

On the evidence of *Katzelmacher* (and it was a pity that the Festival did not provide the opportunity to see his other films, having opted, mysteriously, in favour of a retrospective of another *giovannissimo*, the infantile prodigy Philippe Garrel) Fassbinder is a really major talent, extending the path pioneered by Godard and Straub.

GEOFFREY NOWELL-SMITH

Wadleigh after Woodstock

Long hair, jeans and sneakers: Mike Wadleigh was in London last September, looking remarkably like one of the crowd from *Woodstock*. But despite his enthusiasm for rock music and the youth explosion in America, he is quick to emphasise the gap that separates him from 'the kids' he was filming. Largely a generation gap. He's twenty-eight, he spent seven years as a medical student, and he's very conscious of belonging to a somewhat serious post-war generation that thinks in terms of social usefulness.

Before *Woodstock*, he worked on essentially 'underground' films (*David Holzman's Diary*, *No Vietnamese Ever Called Me Nigger*) and a number of 'liberal documentaries' for National Educational Television, but is fairly sceptical about the usefulness of making films for minority groups like the underground or of preaching liberalism to the liberals who provide educational TV with the bulk of its audience. It was the

prospect of reaching a mass public—as well as the prospect of getting enough money to finish the film the way he wanted it—that made him accept Warners' offer for *Woodstock*, though he vehemently denies the suggestion that Warners influenced the form it finally took.

The idea for a split-screen music film had taken shape when he and his associates were editing a TV film about Aretha Franklin and trying to save time selecting shots by projecting four sets of images on to a single screen. Wadleigh points out that although he used the Warner lot for editing and sound mixing, no one from Warners even saw the film until March 1970, after it was completed; that he had a much publicised battle with them over its length (which they wanted to cut from 184 to 90 minutes); and that although thirteen of the artists performing at *Woodstock* were under contract to their recording company subsidiaries, only one of them (Jimi Hendrix) actually appeared in the film. As he puts it: 'You should never believe anyone who complains that the only way you can make a movie is by sacrificing artistic control. For 5 per cent of the profits, *anyone* can have artistic control. But most people want 25 or 30 per cent and artistic control, and that's impossible.'

But Wadleigh freely admits that *Woodstock* was not entirely the film he set out to make. He originally intended to make it much more of a documentary about the people attending the festival, and had planned to use mainly interview footage. But when he got there he found that although the audience contained any number of articulate people, they were either more interested in listening to the music than in talking to a stray film-maker or else too stoned to say anything particularly coherent. And that anyway the sheer volume of the music involved removing both the interviewee and the equipment so far from the main event as to be largely impracticable.

To compensate for the lack of usable interviews, he decided to

select concert material less for the brilliance of a particular performance (though he did include Joe Cocker and Ten Years After for this reason) than for the 'commentary' provided by the lyrics, which for him express the 'politics' of pop. He had also originally intended to present a more critical view of the generation on parade at *Woodstock*, but while the film was being edited, the New York State Legislature passed a law—since taken up by seventeen other States—virtually outlawing music festivals. So Wadleigh felt obliged to make as positive a statement as possible: he played down the bad trips, deleted footage about the boy who died from a heroin overdose, and emphasised the peace and love. 'In that sense, you could say that *Woodstock* is a commercial movie, in that it's really a semi-sales job on behalf of the kids.'

Woodstock may have got him away from minority audiences but it's still about a minority group. For his next film (which he insists he'll only make if he can again convince himself of the usefulness of making films), he wants to get right away from minorities and make a documentary about white middle-class America. 'Not the radical right and not drop-outs, but moderately liberal people... the kind of people I grew up amongst in Ohio... the kind of people you get in John Cheever's short stories.' He's critical of the fact that most films emanate from either New York or the West Coast—both places that reflect the most extreme contemporary trends—rather than from places with more firmly rooted traditions. So he wants to go back for this film to the Midwest town where he grew up.

What interests him is the way the new values of the younger generation are permeating the lives of very unrevolutionary people: daughters not just dis-regarding their mothers' advice about preserving their chastity, but also persuading their mothers of the relevance of Women's Liberation to their own lives; consequently changing their parents'

Director and star: Ingmar Bergman and Elliott Gould on 'The Touch'





'Brewster McCloud': Bud Cort as the flying fantasist taking to the air in Robert Altman's new film. Much of it, including this scene, was shot at the Astrodome in Houston, Texas.

relationship to one another as well as their own relationship with their parents. Whereas *Woodstock* situated the youth movement in an ephemeral social limbo, he wants this time to trace it back to its roots, showing at family level some of the less sensational but perhaps more fundamental changes taking place in America today.

Though intending to make another documentary, he's pretty scathing about most *cinéma-vérité*, complaining that film-makers who will go to enormous trouble to collect hours of footage 'tend to abdicate at the editing stage.' Like *Woodstock*, his new film will be carefully edited; also like *Woodstock*, it will be cut to music, this time to a folk rock score. If not the sound of middle-class America, then at least a sound in which the modern and the traditional combine to produce the kind of change that concerns him most.

JAN DAWSON

Film into Detergent

The directors are fighting back... Since the report in the Autumn 1970 SIGHT AND SOUND concerning the additions and deletions made by Universal in Joseph Losey's *Secret Ceremony* and Peter Hall's *Three into Two Won't Go* to prepare them for television consumption, both directors have made open protests: Losey in statements at the Cinema City exhibition and elsewhere, Hall in a long piece in *The Times*.

Both have claimed that the changes substantially reverse the meaning of their work. In *Secret Ceremony*, Elizabeth Taylor's prostitute character has apparently

been changed into a lady who does part-time wig modelling; in *Three into Two*, the Judy Geeson hitchhiker is now a girl who has broken her parole, having left home because her drunken stepfather doesn't love her. The directors say that the added conversations in both films between doctors, psychiatrists and lawyers have the effect of erasing all ambiguous tensions and giving an air of safe 'cosiness'. In Peter Hall's words: 'They want to make them morally acceptable to a world TV audience, Christians, Jews, Buddhists, the lot. Incidentally, they also put back some

sections I had discarded.'

Neither Hall nor Losey was consulted on the revisions (legally, the company has the right to alter its properties), and Hall only knew three weeks before the actual transmission. The best they could do at this stage was to ask for their names to be removed from the credits of the TV versions (Edna O'Brien, who wrote *Three into Two*, was unable, for contractual reasons, to follow the same course). Compared with the million dollars which Universal can apparently earn from a couple of TV screenings by a major network, the additional

scenes cost relatively little to shoot. 'Strictly B-picture stuff,' says Hall, 'with flat lighting and sets with obvious American accessories.'

Losey particularly deprecated the TV version's use of an extended flashback and the voice-over device in which the characters' motivations are actually reversed; Hall is shocked by the treatment of the Judy Geeson character. 'All the bedroom scenes have been removed, of course, and they have taken away her force and personality—all her little edgy, surprising remarks have gone. And there are some extraordinary dialogue additions. Towards the end, when the chairman of the company is talking to a friend of Steiger's, he says "I was going to make him vice-president, but a man who has trouble at home has trouble at work."'

Hall told me that he had received several sympathetic and bewildered letters from complete strangers in America (some of whom had seen the original) asking what had happened. 'Why did you do this to your film, some asked, not knowing that I had no part.' What can be done to prevent further repetitions, for with the international TV market growing film material is likely to be in even greater demand? Both Losey and Hall are worried about the long-term effects that fear of possible changes may have on producers and directors when they are preparing their subjects, and Losey stressed the importance of trying to achieve the kind of copyright arrangement that exists in France and Italy, where a film's copyright is invested with director, writer and composer. Hall feels that a Directors' Guild might be a useful force. 'And ridicule is a good weapon—Universal are apparently not sensitive in any area except that of ridicule.' Peter Hall's next project is a version of Huxley's *Brave New World*. 'The mind boggles, doesn't it?'

JOHN GILLET

Life on the road in Bob Rafelson's 'Five Easy Pieces'



1970: Obituary

DECEMBER '69: Alexandre Kamenka, enterprising French producer (*Michel Strogoff*, *Italian Straw Hat*, *Les Bas Fonds*); Eric Portman, reliable British actor, often in seedy character parts (*The Deep Blue Sea*, *The Whisperers*); Hugh Williams, British actor and playwright, master of sophisticated light comedy; Josef von Sternberg, Dietrich's Svengali; Léon Barsacq, noted French art director (*Les Enfants du Paradis*, *La Beauté du Diable*, *Les Diaboliques*); Jiri Trnka, Czech puppet film-maker; Leigh Harline, American composer (*Snow White*, *Monkey Business*, *Broken Lance*); Iris Barry, pioneer critic and film historian, co-founder of the Film Society and later the first curator of film at the Museum of Modern Art.

JANUARY: James Edwards, Negro actor, the man on the couch in *Home of the Brave*; Jimmy Hanley, British actor, usually radiating Cockney bonhomie; Sylvie, veteran French actress, immortalised by her radiant performance as *La Vieille Dame Indigne*; Aldo De Benedetti, Italian scriptwriter for early De Sica and Blasetti.

FEBRUARY: Roscoe Karns, American supporting actor of the Thirties, notably in screwball comedies (*Twentieth Century*, *It Happened One Night*); Jules Munshin, rubber-faced actor-dancer, the third sailor in *On the Town*, one of the defecting Russians in *Silk Stockings*; Conrad Nagel, Twenties leading man who survived the coming of sound (*Quality Street*, *East Lynne*); Otto Heller, British cameraman (*The High Command*, *The Queen of Spades*, *The Ipcress File*); Alfred Newman, veteran Hollywood composer and musical director; Gregory Chmara, Christ in Robert Wiene's *I.N.R.I.*, later in numerous French films; Guy Endore, American scriptwriter (*The Devil Doll*, *Song of Russia*), one of McCarthy's victims; Harry Stradling, British cameraman of *Kermesse Héroïque*, later worked mainly in Hollywood (*Guys and Dolls*, *My Fair Lady*); Eiji Tsuburaya, Toho special effects man, creator of Godzilla and his family of monsters; Gaston Modot, veteran French actor, the man in *L'Age d'Or*, the tragi-comic gamekeeper of *La Règle du Jeu*; Arthur Edeson, master American cameraman (*All Quiet on the Western Front*, *The Maltese Falcon*, *Casablanca*); Pathé News, after years of crowing.

MARCH: William Hopper, son of Hedda, best known as Perry Mason's roving investigator; William Beaudine, prolific American director, mainly of second features like the *Bowery Boys* series; Lev Kuleshov, pioneer Russian director, best known for *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks*; Patricia



Ellis, American actress of the Thirties, in her own words 'Queen of the Warner B-pictures'; Walter B. McGrail, silent star, gallant saviour of Pearl White in *The Perils of Pauline*.

APRIL: Victor Trivas, best known for the pacifist *No Man's Land*, later scripted Welles' *The Stranger*; Gypsy Rose Lee, queen of the vaudeville strippers; Anita Louise, popular leading lady of the Thirties (*Story of Louis Pasteur*, *Marie Antoinette*); Arthur Shields, veteran Irish character actor, notably in several Ford films (*The Quiet Man*, *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*); Byron Foulger, American supporting actor, the archetypal harassed clerk (*Edison the Man*, *Sullivan's Travels*); Ed Begley, bluff Irish-American actor, Boss Finley in *Sweet Bird of Youth*; Albert d'Agostino, R.K.O. art director (*Clash by Night*, *The Lusty Men*); Tatzumbia Dupea, Indian squaw in countless Westerns, reputedly at 120.

MAY: Inger Stevens, blonde actress of some promise (*Guide for the Married Man*, *Madigan*); Billie Burke, Ziegfeld's wife, usually cast as fluttering innocent, the good fairy in *Wizard of Oz*; Hy Hazell, British actress, mainly in second features and often as good-hearted tart; Folco Lulli, Italian actor, Luigi in *Wages of Fear*.

JUNE: Albert Lamorisse, French birdman, pioneered aerial photography from helicopter; Sonny Tufts, Hollywood second lead in Forties and Fifties (*So Proudly We Hail*, *The Virginian*, *The Seven Year Itch*); Frank Silvera, Jamaican actor often cast as heavy, the dance hall owner in *Killer's Kiss*; William H. Daniels, veteran American cameraman for Stroheim, many Garbo films, *Winchester '73*.

JULY: Marjorie Rambeau, American character actress, Joan Crawford's bitchy mother in *Torch Song*; Hein Heckroth, German-born art director of several Powell-Pressburger films, notably *The Red Shoes* and *Tales of Hoffmann*; Preston Foster, popular Thirties leading man, the rebel commandant in *The Informer*, latterly relegated to minor support; Arthur C. Miller, American cameraman of *Bella Donna*, *Wee Willie Winkie*, *The Ox-Bow Incident*; Fritz Kortner, Austrian actor (*Pandora's Box*, *Dreyfus*) reduced to playing Hollywood Germans before his triumphant return to the German theatre; Claud Allister, British actor, often playing aristocratic ditherers, Algy in *Bulldog Drummond*; Leith Stevens, Hollywood composer, one of the first to see the potential of jazz for film scoring (*War of the Worlds*, *The Wild One*, *Private Hell 36*); Roger Edens, songwriter and musical supervisor, the creative talent behind some of the best musicals (*Easter Parade*, *On the Town*, *Funny Face*).

AUGUST: Frances Farmer, stormy star of the late Thirties (*Come and Get It*, *Ebb Tide*); Tomo Uchida, veteran Japanese director (*The Theatre of Life, Earth*), little known in the West; Mary Clare, British actress, often playing formidable ladies of circumstance; Skeets Kelly, British aerial cameraman, killed working on *Zeppelin*.

SEPTEMBER: Chester Morris, star of the *Boston Blackie* series, latterly on TV; Bernard Noël, French actor (*Le Feu Follet*, *Une Femme Mariée*); Edward Everett Horton, rangy, diffident scene-stealer of many a comedy, the Mad Hatter in *Alice in Wonderland*; Bourvil, French comic, usually playing proletarian types like the black-marketeer in *La Traversée de Paris* and the obstinate farmer in *Tout l'Or du Monde*; Angelo Rizzi, Italian producer, notably of several Fellini films; Erich Maria Remarque, author of *All Quiet on the Western Front*.

OCTOBER: Grethe Weiser, veteran German actress; Ernest Haller, American cameraman (*Dawn Patrol*, *Gone with the Wind*, *Rebel Without a Cause*).

NOVEMBER: Fernand Gravet, French actor who also worked in Britain and America, Strauss in *The Great Waltz*; Henri Jeanson, scriptwriter of *Un Carnet de Bal*, *Boule de Suif*, *Fanfan la Tulipe*; Naunton Wayne, Basil Radford's other half, insouciant cricket fan in *The Lady Vanishes*; Yukio Mishima, writer (*The Golden Pavilion*), by harakiri.

1970: The Top Ten

THE BOY *** CHRONICLE OF ANNA MAGDALENA BACH *** CONTEMPT *** DILLINGER IS DEAD *** KILLER! *** LEO THE LAST *** PIGSTY *** SANJURO *** THE SHAMELESS OLD LADY *** ZABRISKIE POINT
—Jan Dawson.

ALICE'S RESTAURANT *** L'AVEU *** CONTEMPT *** FIGURES IN A LANDSCAPE *** A GENTLE CREATURE *** HERE IS YOUR LIFE *** KILLER! *** MEDIUM COOL *** TELL THEM WILLIE BOY IS HERE *** YOJIMBO
—Philip French.

ALICE'S RESTAURANT *** THE BOY *** BRONCO BULLFROG *** THE CONFRONTATION *** CONTEMPT *** A GENTLE CREATURE *** KILLER! *** LEO THE LAST *** THE PRIVATE LIFE OF SHERLOCK HOLMES *** ZABRISKIE POINT
—Penelope Houston.

CONTEMPT *** DILLINGER IS DEAD *** DOWNHILL RACER *** KILLER! *** M*A*S*H *** MEDIUM COOL *** PARTNER *** A PASSION *** TELL THEM WILLIE BOY IS HERE *** ZABRISKIE POINT
—Gavin Millar.

ALICE'S RESTAURANT *** THE BALLAD OF CABLE HOGUE *** BLOODY MAMA *** THE BOY *** BRONCO BULLFROG *** CONTEMPT *** A GENTLE CREATURE *** KILLER! *** LEO THE LAST *** THE PRIVATE LIFE OF SHERLOCK HOLMES
—Tom Milne.

ALICE'S RESTAURANT *** THE BOY *** BRONCO BULLFROG *** THE CONFRONTATION *** THE DAMNED *** FLESH *** A GENTLE CREATURE *** KES *** M*A*S*H *** ZABRISKIE POINT
—David Robinson.

ALICE'S RESTAURANT *** THE BOY *** CONTEMPT *** A GENTLE CREATURE *** KILLER! *** LEO THE LAST *** A PASSION *** PIGSTY *** TWO OR THREE THINGS I KNOW ABOUT HER *** ZABRISKIE POINT
—Philip Strick.

BLOODY MAMA *** BRONCO BULLFROG *** FELLINI SATYRICON *** FLESH *** HAMLET *** THE HAPPY ENDING *** KES *** KILLER! *** PIGSTY *** THE RISE OF LOUIS XIV (BBC-TV)—John Russell Taylor

LA CHINOISE *** THE CONFRONTATION *** THE DAMNED *** DILLINGER IS DEAD *** KILLER! *** LONESOME COWBOYS *** THE MOLLY MAGUIRES *** THE RISE OF LOUIS XIV (BBC-TV) *** SANJURO *** ZABRISKIE POINT—Mike Wallington.

THE BOY *** CHRONICLE OF ANNA MAGDALENA BACH *** THE CONFRONTATION *** CONTEMPT *** DOUBLE SUICIDE *** A GENTLE CREATURE *** KILLER! *** LEO THE LAST *** A PASSION *** PIGSTY—David Wilson.

Above left: Edward Everett Horton, Sylvie (in 'La Vieille Femme Indigne') and Josef von Sternberg

Cocks & Chicken at the

A REPORT BY MIKE WALLINGTON
ON THE INTERNATIONAL
UNDERGROUND FESTIVAL AT
THE NATIONAL FILM THEATRE

Sad to relate, the first large convention in Britain of underground film-makers proved less memorable for its films than for its peripheral events: the zany (Dieter Meier's *Eyefilm* seen through sheets of glass); the macabre (Otto Muehl's threat to slice up a live chicken and the minor riot this provoked); the exhibitionist (Peter Weibel and Valie Export making an unsuccessful attempt to commit fellatio on stage in their *Homage to Greta Garbo*); and the contestatory (a sprinkling of Maoist agitators). The festival was essentially disparate, with the monolithic category 'underground' revealed as a label pasted over diverse approaches of non-commercial cinema whose only common ground is the desire for alternative means of distribution.



A movement it is not, though there are small working groups within it, united—as the Germans seemed to be—by cultural tradition and political stance. But the programme planning (*carte blanche* to David Curtis of the New Arts Lab) was often an obstacle to seeing the films on their own terms. The inevitable 'pop film' session presented a group of excruciatingly bad films connected only by their incidental music; the Los Angeles programme disconcertingly coupled a highly abstract computer film (John Stehura's *Cybernetic 5.3*) with Alvin Toku-nov's *Chicago*, a newsreel compilation of riots and assassination; while two purist film-makers, Markopoulos and Kubelka, felt sufficiently disenchanted with the 'underground' label to insist on separate showings for their respective works.

The hundred hours of National Film Theatre screenings revealed at least five distinct species of underground film-makers. First, the 'Poets' who, in Cocteau's words, 'interpret and translate the living language of dreams.' They use unconventional cutting, lighting or camera movements to transform reality through an imagery of the subconscious. At best—in the work of Fritz André Kracht, Robert Nelson, Will Hindle and, of course, Stan Brakhage (*Scenes from under Childhood*)—the transformation achieves personal vision; at worst, it appears elitist or obscurantist (the English 8 mm. programme).

Second, the theoreticians, concerned with visual perception and rejecting the romantic concept of beauty in favour of sensory experience and a recognition of the tangible qualities of celluloid itself, using loops of film, treating the film's surfaces directly, and deliberately denying a narrative structure. With their exclusively formal preoccupations, their films are the most alienating for a novice audience; but if there is an *avant-garde*, it is presumably locatable here, in experiments with the mechanism of seeing. Malcolm Legrice of the London Co-op (*How to Screw the C.I.A.*) uses microdots, loops and mattes to depict the banal in 'abstract formal situations' (frequently stock-shot material). Paul Sharits in *N.O.T.H.I.N.G.*, using successive flash frames of different colours, and Robert Beavers in *Diminished Frame*, using lenses and filters to produce a series of coloured canvases, both attempt to explore the *correspondance* between colour and mood. Bruce Conner in *Report* tries to define the point at which an image loses its effectiveness by repeating and varying the speed of footage of the Kennedy assassination.

A third category might be described as the humanists, film-makers employing an informal rather than a non-existent structure and taking people as their primary subject, extending the home-movie outwards into crusading social comment (Sheldon Rochlin

Top: Elke Koska in Fritz André Kracht's *'Jalousie'*

Centre: Frans Zwartjes' *'Eating'*

Right: Robert Beavers' *'Still Light'*

in *Dope*) or national allegory (Bruce Baillie) and inwards to personal history (Jonas Mekas). Because this approach has biography as its lowest common denominator, some of the films have a superficial coherence that derives from neither style nor technique; others merely reflect a drab domesticity (the Australians seemed primarily concerned with wives and girl-friends washing up) or a thinly disguised charlatanism (arbitrary footage hastily spliced to secure fellow-travellers their delegate's pass).

Then there are the anti-artists, who see the medium stultifying in its own pretensions and attack it: with purposefully poor craftsmanship (the German X Screen Co-op reanimate stills, rephotograph with dirt and irregular framing, and produce distasteful strobe effects and noise assaults calculated to provoke); with visceral, anti-erotic exposures (the 'happenings' of Otto Muehl and Kurt Kren); or, like Weibel and Export, reject the medium as too distancing and only employ slides as a backdrop for their staged events. The obvious danger of this group's precarious include-me-out philosophy lies in its championship of the utterly banal.

Lastly, there are the overtly political filmmakers. From this group only Godard's *Pravda* showed any signs of being a cinematic as well as a dogmatic tract. His analysis of revisionism in Czechoslovakia also continues his investigation of the dialectic relationship between images, words and sounds. But most of the other agit-prop, especially that from Italy and Spain, tended towards the juvenile.

Intention apart, the majority of the films shown were dross, and mass walk-outs were not uncommon. So the positive achievements stood out all the more clearly. While his compatriots (Lombardi or Bargellini, for instance) indulged in mystifying religious and political symbolism, Italian Gianfranco Barucello offered randomly coded messages which, like *Finnegans Wake*, use the scenario as the point of arrival rather than departure. All three of Barucello's films ridicule contemporary myths and archetypes—American film clichés, lyrical commercials—by employing a variety of cinematic punctuation mistakes. The English 8 mm. collection, though for the most part unnervingly reliant on pop music to simulate a superficial trendiness rather than contribute a synaesthetic experience, did offer the ultimate *bricoleur's* film, *Barbarëveuse*, an anarchist poem of the dreaming comic-strip heroine structured, *pace* Bachelard, around the four elements. A complex montage of monsters, science fiction footage, blue movies, animated graphics reminiscent of Borowczyk, and snippets culled from sources ranging from Ken Russell to newsreel footage of the mushroom cloud (the only cliché in the imagery), it conspires to locate revolutionary activity in the penis and the gun. By Robert Short, but a film that Breton might have made.

Roland Lethem, *Midi-Minuit's* Belgian correspondent, showed four films as interesting for their Sixties' surrealism (out of Hara-Kiri journals by way of Russ Meyer pornography and horror movies) as for their distinct relation one to the other. His four-stanza *Souffrances d'un Oeuf Meurtri* has moments worthy of Cocteau and Buñuel—

starfish reborn from a man's mouth, girl's pudenda seething with maggots, eggs letting blood—but has a hermetic awkwardness which is overcome in his next parable, *La Fée Sanguinaire*, a deliciously funny and revolutionary assertion. Dropped at her victim's doorstep in a barrel, an exterminating angel lures her prey to bed only to lop off his genitals and drop them into a bottle of formaldehyde, as a slow, majestic pan reveals a whole row of bottles containing severed members of the world's political and religious leaders. *Le Sexe Enragé* is more explicitly political: a bourgeois client transformed into a mouse is cannibalised by a prostitute in *flagrante delicto*, with the camera changing focus in time with her breathing.

Despairing of audiences who habitually miss the radical message which he clothes in surreal imagery, Lethem in *Bande de Cons* incites them to leave the cinema and hurls abuse at those who stay. Over its slim plot, involving the police interrogation of a girl claiming to have been raped through the nostrils, a barrage of insults exhorts the audience to some active response: leaving, shouting back, ripping up the screen.

Jonas Mekas' *Diaries, Notes and Sketches* was a long, loving record of everyday affairs scaffolded, like a book of *haikus*, round the calendar seasons. Moving away from the theatricality of *The Brig* and the conscious commitment of *Hallelujah the Hills*, this home-movie, shot over the months with Mekas' friends, rescues naturalism in the American cinema from the false psychology of a scripted dramaturgy. An expressly uncommercial film without the dogmatism of anti-commercial films.



Roland Lethem's *'Souffrances d'un Oeuf Meurtri'*

Gregory Markopoulos, through his unique editing style and immaculate colour, allows his films to discover themselves: the theme or mood of an establishing image is excavated by successions of pulsating lengths of film flashing up on the dark screen. *Gammelion* is expanded from nine minutes in-camera to an hour of screen time by a succession of fades. The other two films he showed, *Eros O Basileus* and *Through a Lens Brightly: Mark Turbyfill*, are both portraits, though the former is overlaid with an arbitrary mythic symbolism. Yet nothing is contrived, nothing extraneous, in a process where biography is both the means and end of editing.

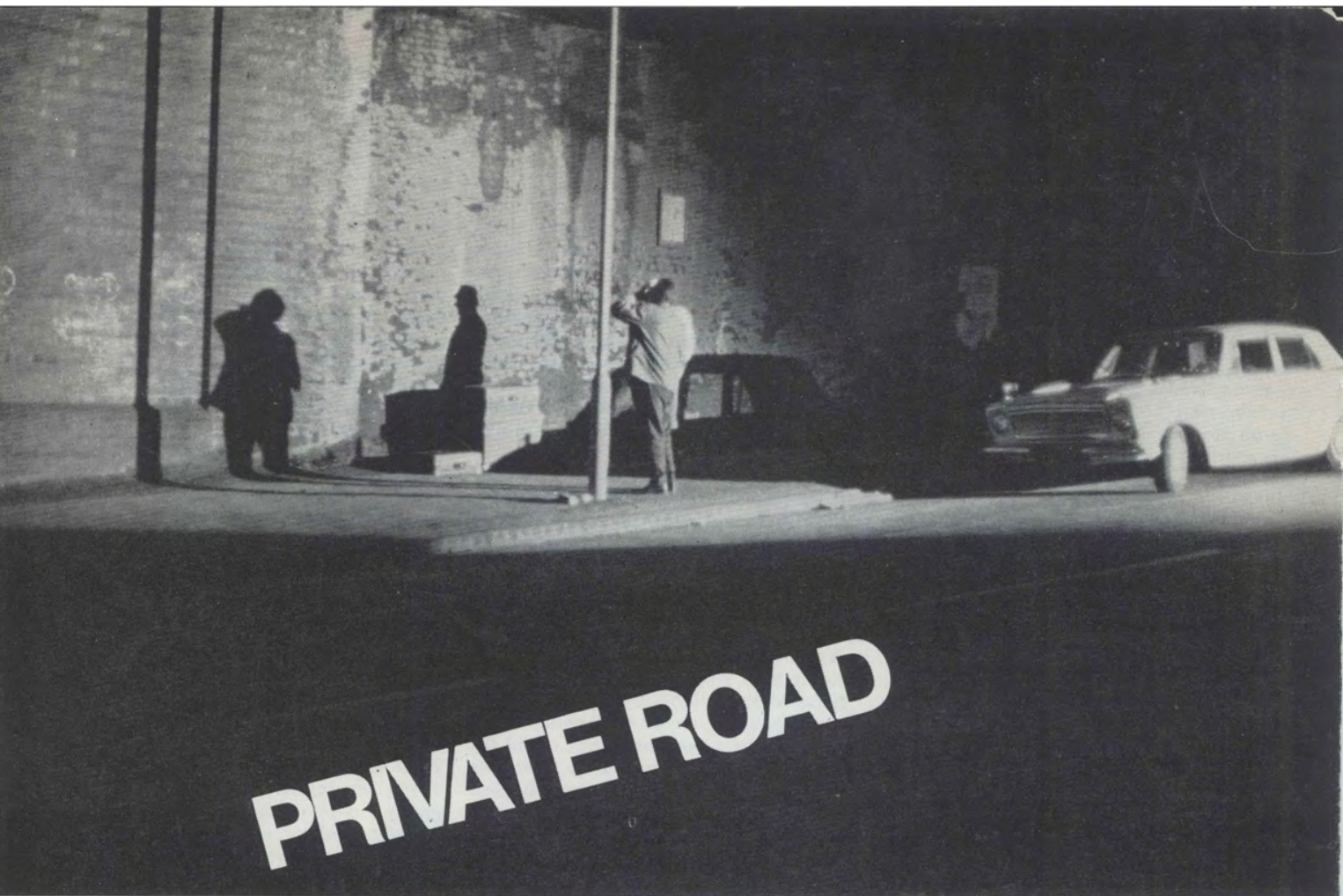
Peter Kubelka came from Austria with a monumental reputation as a perfectionist,

and his complete works were shown: five shorts representing twelve years of labour and lasting less than an hour. There is something awesome in the elemental, often mechanistic, power of these films, a power generated by the atoms and molecules of individual frames and their articulation with one another and with the soundtrack. The images may be prosaic, like the beer drinkers of *Schwechater*, or they may not even exist, like the 'empty' light-filled frames of *Arnulf Rainer*, but their poetry is a microscopic orchestration from sprocket hole to sprocket hole. The early films can be passed off as purist experimentation or primeval revelation, depending on how you feel (though some would say, depending on how many times you've seen them). But it is difficult not to warm to *Unsere Afrikareise*, where the technique is in full throttle. Each movement, gesture and sound in its twelve-and-a-half minute length is in audio-visual counterpoint so that it is impossible to make one-to-one correlations between event recalled and emotion invoked. This African hunting trip describes much of the ambivalence of human experiences—sadness and joy, frustration and liberation, admiration and loathing.

But the festival's undisputed laureate was a modest Dutchman, Frans Zwartjes (see Peter Cowie in *SIGHT AND SOUND*, Summer 1970), whose nine shorts encapsulate, in grainy, overexposed textures and with frenetic blinking editing, a neurotic syndrome of frustrated drives, of tics and tropes jittering on the point of sublimation. In *Spare Bedroom, Toilet, A Fan and Seats Two*, there are moments of montage to take one's breath away, humour out of the Jarry drawer, and a salivatory sexuality seldom equalled in the cinema. A world of fixations, explored in their nascent fulfilment: people of uncertain sex eating, drinking, playing with their clothes, dreaming and touching each other.

In contrast, the festival's most unpopular event was surely the screening of Otto Muehl's works. His filmed *Materialaktionen* are obscenity in *extremis*, portraying men and women in harrowingly pornographic antics involving dead animals, blood, excreta, semen, juices and 'scientific' instruments. The treatment involves neither eroticism nor sick jokes but a relentlessly aggressive challenge to our capacity to overcome taboo. Behind it all there apparently lies an entrenched theoretical stance, a precise hyperaesthetic which results from changing all the plus signs to minus signs in our equations of beauty and truth. Muehl would argue that in *Sodoma*, with every kink from shit-eating to transvestism, he is harnessing the negative elements of bourgeois morality—orgy, excess, caricature—in order to liberate them from their cultural straitjackets. Some members of his audience argued that his defilement of human feeling and dignity had no precedent outside the concentration camp. You pays your money and you takes your pick.

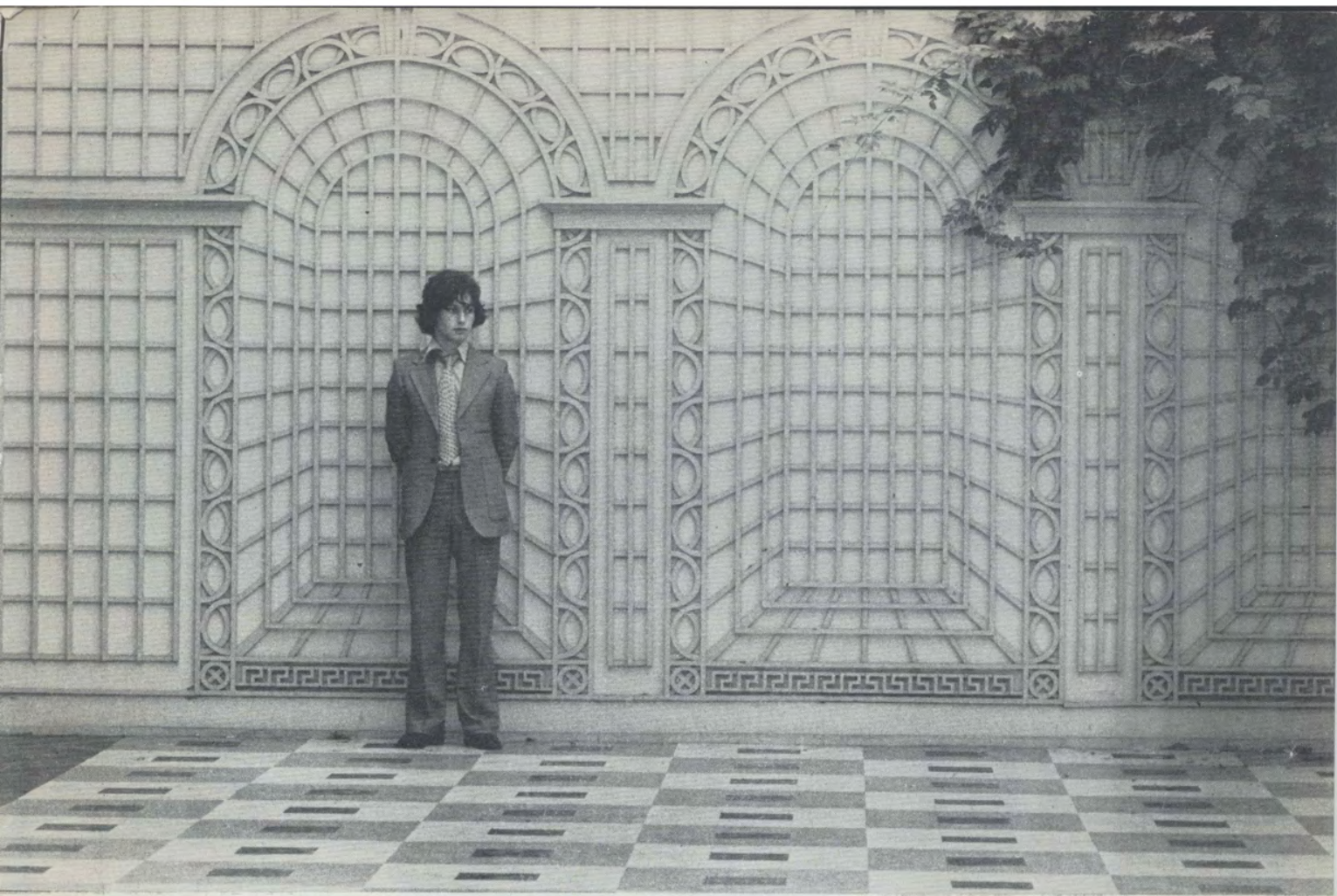
Which is really the crux of this type of open festival: the NFT did not feel empowered to censor any entrant on any grounds, moral, aesthetic or political. And if the festive spirit was lacking, it was not (as some participants suggested) because of the venue, but because of the humourlessness of so many of the films. ■



'Private Road' is the second film by Barney Platts-Mills and the 'Bronco Bullfrog' team. This time in colour and with professional actors, it's the story of a classless young man (a writer) and the middle-class girl he tries to

prize away from her family background. With Bruce Robinson as the young man, Susan Penhaligon as the girl (below and right). Michael Feast with them outside restaurant (far right). Below, right: Barney Platts-Mills.





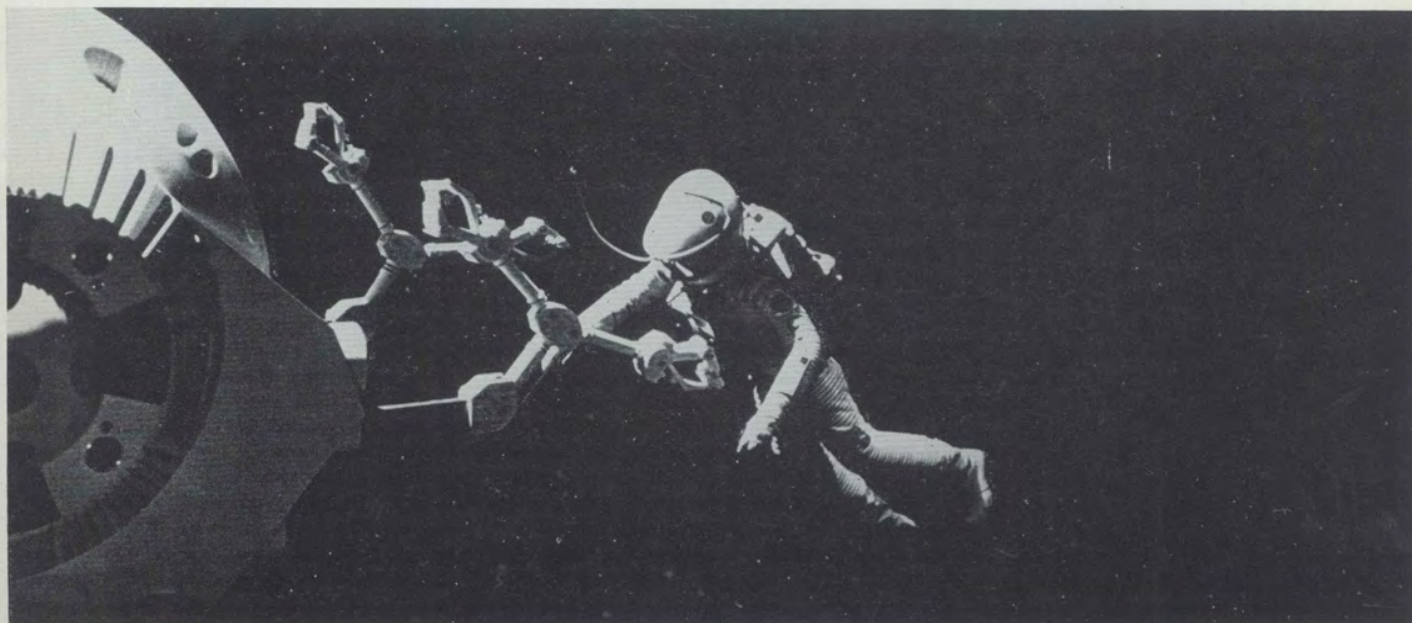


A SKELETON KEY TO 2001

Don Daniels

The young cult for Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* now has its Holy Writ. The second 70 mm. release of the movie was accompanied by a collection entitled *The Making of Kubrick's '2001'* and edited, with the cooperation of the director, by Jerome Agel. Agel's anti-anthology is 'non-linear', a McLuhanesque trip for the fans, a pressbook of statements from cast and crew, interviews, telegrams, news releases, letters, reviews, re-reviews, memorabilia and relics, including co-creator Arthur C. Clarke's short story germ *The Sentinel*, Kubrick as *Playboy*, Penelope Gilliatt's fine early appreciation, and 96 pages of photographs.

Unlike Clarke's novel, evidently an unsatisfactory authority for the faithful, the new revelation is modishly spaced-out, celebratory, obsessional. Agel ends with a fragment of dialogue from the film: '...its origin and purpose still a total mystery.' But true art, authentic mystery, surely deserves better than phony mystification through breathless technical notes on special effects and easy juxtaposition of favourable and unfavourable reviews. The 'Oh-wow!' enthusiasm of *2001*'s fans persuades about as well as those initial pans from U.S. critics. Thus, the timid, babbling faddists advertise an achievement beyond discussion, and the unconverted claim boredom with a work beneath consideration. Collectively, they demonstrate how irrelevant film criticism can be. The cooperation of *2001*'s director in the republication of so much nonsense can only be another of his darkly humorous demonstrations of the Word's inefficiency, a further, 368-page obstacle to approaching his movie. *The Making of Kubrick's '2001'* replaces coherence with accumulation.



It is possible to admire Kubrick's achievement despite the cult, to discuss *2001* as neither wholly ineffable nor merely pretentious. The new *Odyssey's* theme is epic, serious, worthy of its extended development, and Kubrick has elevated the melodramatic didacticism of most science fiction to a filmic poetry that justifies its 'pretension' with an Olympian spectacle.

Conceptually, the work borrows as widely as its musical score. Kubrick appears to have turned to a science fiction subject following *Dr. Strangelove's* atomic apocalypse in search of some alternative to a probable future of nuclear annihilation. The specific theme has all but disappeared in the finished film, except by implication in certain scenes and in the broadest application of *2001's* resolution. (The threat of atomic holocaust is still present in Clarke's novel.) The movie's prophecies are based on analogies with the past, and a similar extrapolation and several of the ideas in both *2001* and *Dr. Strangelove* can be found in a 1955 essay by Arthur Koestler entitled 'The Trail of the Dinosaur'.

Here, Koestler contrasts a sophisticated technology for destruction with the insanely primitive morality of 20th-century man. The only hope he finds for a permanent solution to the danger of a world of coexisting nuclear powers is in a possible 'mutation' in the beliefs, interests and emotions of mankind. As an example of the type of mutation necessary, Koestler turns to the Copernican revolution and the Enlightenment, which served to reorient the vision and redirect the energies of the race but which, he insists, have led ultimately to a loss of faith, a spiritual starvation. Koestler hopes for a future Copernican revolution-in-reverse: '... The next few decades ... will decide whether *Homo sapiens* will go the way of the dinosaur, or mutate towards a stabler future. We shall either destroy ourselves or take off to the stars.'

It is a measure of the boldness and despair of *2001's* creators that the mutation proposed in both film and novel is less metaphorical, and that the only hope for a reprieve from the insanity of 20th or 21st century existence is through a radical evolutionary growth in intelligence equivalent to the 'mutation' of ape into man. Clarke's fiction has previously used this Nietzschean concept out of Olaf Stapledon (*2001* is Clarke's *Last and First Men*). It is suggested even in his non-fiction, as in *The Promise of Space*. 'Among the stars lies the proper study of mankind; Pope's aphorism gave only part of the truth, for the proper study of mankind is not merely Man, but Intelligence. ...'

As I see it, Kubrick's film is a study of various capacities for consciousness, an attempt to suggest through spectacle the possibilities and limitations of the powers of Mind for perception, intellection and feeling. As a spectacle, the film appeals to the sensuous, emotional, non-rational appetites of the mind with an immediacy and power that argue for the potential value of such faculties, an argument proposed even as human powers for perception come to seem finite indeed in the spectacle's rendering of the immensity of space. Viewed from such a godlike perspective, and with the possibility for an evolutionary 'mutation' a distant hope, human Intelligence must appear a fixed capacity for the limited development and integration of certain faculties of conscious-

ness. *2001* thus deals with broad epistemological questions, like Koestler's suggestion that the modern dilemma results from an intellectual triumph in technology and a tragic failure of moral intelligence in applying that technology towards the sustenance and enhancement of life. In the film, the scientists of *2001* are failures even as the man-apes of the prologue in the exploitation of their capacity for Intelligence, limited as that capacity may ultimately be.

The visual beauty of Kubrick's film has distracted some viewers from noticing the limitation and the failure. Indeed, so beautiful are the machines of this technological Eden, some viewers overlook the less than utopian aspects of 21st-century life. Kubrick's dysutopia in space can do without the threat of nuclear extinction: the human beings are only half conscious anyway. In *2001*, Plato's republic has been established in outer space (Dr. Heywood Floyd and Dr. David Bowman are clearly our philosopher kings), but with a vengeance, for the citizens are Nietzsche's 'last men'. The film, like the novel, is highly Platonic in its distrust of the material fragility of human existence; but, unlike the novel, the movie attacks a rationalistic pursuit of truth in all distrust of the emotions. Clarke's future utopia must be taken straight, while the film continues a tradition of anti-utopian science fiction that began as early as H. G. Wells's *The First Men in the Moon*, with its slave republic ruled by a giant intellect.

Kubrick's ambivalent attitude towards technology has confused some viewers. The film clearly celebrates the triumph of scientific rationalism, especially in the voyage to the Moon. But it places that celebration within the context of the battle with HAL, technology personified, and of suggestions of a superhuman technology in the finale. Such clear progression is hardly confusion. It is part of the same Olympian vision that disturbed some admirers of *Dr. Strangelove* who claimed the comedy's high spirits welcomed apocalypse. Such *naïveté* misses the point: *Dr. Strangelove* celebrates the end of the world only if our world exactly resembles that of the film. Just so, the men of *2001* would be recognised as admirable only by their own kind today. A film that views the human race as merely a local, temporary repository of Mind risks the kind of criticism that indulges in humanistic pieties. Kubrick generously trusts the intelligence of his audience to draw the obvious moral. He is too busy providing the *exemplum*.

2

2001 deals not only with forces and goals of biological evolution, with the growth of Mind on our planet, but with two other large imponderables: the possibility of the existence of superhuman extraterrestrial Intelligence and the possibility that machine intelligence, advanced computers, will develop into a form of mind greater than man's. Each of the film's four major sections illustrates a capacity for consciousness in its central character. In 'The Dawn of Man', Moon-watcher, the hominoid that discovers the bone-weapon-tool, represents a subhuman form of instinctual-emotional consciousness. On the way to the Moon, Dr. Heywood Floyd is human sentience at sunset, in the

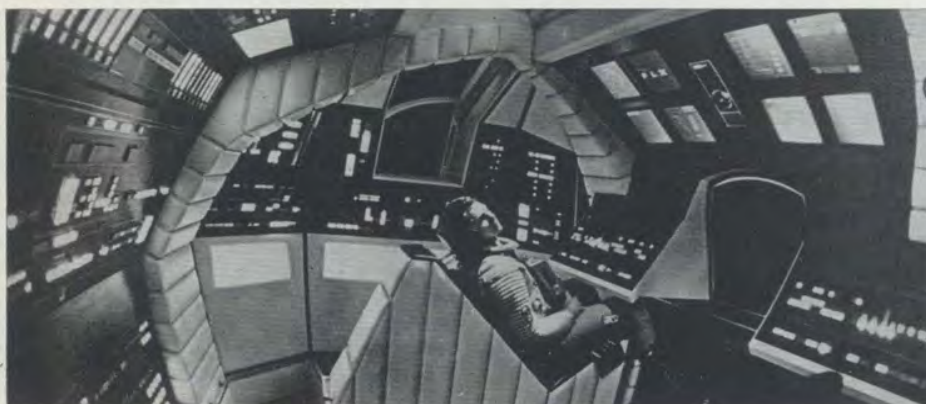
second childhood of a race's senility. The super-computer HAL 9000 would be machine Intelligence as the brain and central nervous system of the spaceship Discovery. In the final section, 'Jupiter and Beyond the Infinite', Bowman is transfigured into a Nietzschean *übermensch* that would represent the highest form of consciousness in the film's possibly limited view of a limitless progression.

Each higher capacity for Intelligence—ape, man, computer, superman—indicates that the preceding ones were finally limited. But within each granted capacity certain faculties are available to the individual who, failing to use and harmonise them, betrays evolutionary progress in a personal devolution, in 'regression'. *2001's* central sections—the flights to the Moon and Jupiter—deal with characters who lack the emotive and the intuitive in their actions, while the outer sections—the prologue and finale—surround the intellect's claims with a spectacle of great emotional expressiveness.

In interviews, Kubrick has repeatedly called for an abandonment of traditional three-act play structure in motion pictures, and he has repeatedly compared the primary emotional power of film to that of music. It is possible that Kubrick has deliberately imitated symphonic form in the creation of his *Odyssey*. The resemblance goes beyond the film's four-part structure. In particular, the prologue and certain visual motifs 'lines' can be seen as filmic equivalents of sonata-allegro form and motivic development in symphonic music.

The prologue makes wonderful use of formal repetition in its tableau and camera set-ups. (One of the triumphs of this 'movement' is that on a sound stage Kubrick was able to create enough visual variety to risk repetition.) 'The Dawn of Man' is in four parts, each preceded by a lengthy fade-out. The first tableau functions like the exposition of theme in first-movement, sonata-allegro form in the symphony. We see the static timelessness of a primeval desert, a wasteland with dwindling food for the bands of hominoids, and, as a climax that sums up the environmental crisis, the attack of the leopard. The theme is developed in the two following parts: the first howling confrontation at the waterhole and the fear and hunger of the night scene in the caves. The final, fourth section would be the recapitulation. The mysterious black monolith arrives in 'answer' to the dilemma of the desert tribe. The parallel with the opening exposition is underlined by the recapitulation's following tableau, which repeats the setting of the leopard's attack for the site of the discovery of the tool. The final two scenes, the carnivores enjoying their new meal and the killing at the waterhole, repeat material from the development as they exactly reverse its previous order: the hunger in the caves and the first fight over water.

If I am correct, the prologue generates the over-arching structure of *2001*, much as the opening movement of a symphony introduces the musical principles to be exploited throughout the composition. The scene of man-apes devouring flesh prefigures the life-giving triumph of technology in the trip to the Moon. The killing at the waterhole later becomes the life-taking 'Jupiter Mission' with its murderous computer, the other side of the technological coin. The night scene



Man and automation in space: 'Beneath the satellite remains the bone . . .'

in the caves and the awakening at dawn become the trip 'Beyond the Infinite', as the philosopher king is allowed a glimpse beyond the cave of our perceivable universe. The tool discoverer, an embryo man, becomes an embryo extraterrestrial in the final shots of **2001**.

Transition from first to second movement, from statement to development, apeman to spaceman, comes in the famous cut from falling bone to orbiting satellite. In *Dr. Strangelove*, the SAC bombers refuelled to 'Try a Little Tenderness', and the humour was not only in the obscene coupling but in the contrast between the sophisticated machinery and the primitive emotionality of the music. In **2001**, Kubrick carries the contrast forward into the future, all the way. Beneath the satellite remains the bone of mankind's primitive emotional-moral equipment. Fittingly, some of the orbiting satellites resemble communications devices (perhaps an invocation of Clarke's prophetic talent). And some resemble bombs. The first tool assisted the growth of Mind by assuring life for the apes. The peaceful use of technology to explore space becomes a modern equivalent. But the matched shots remind us that 'progress' is deceptive if it merely involves building better bones.

Just as the prologue had begun with a threatened evolutionary regression in the near extinction of the apes, only to produce a new progression in capacity for Intelligence, so the second movement of **2001** begins with apparent progress through technological wonders only to undermine our faith in it. We are continually provided with references to the primitive in the midst of the spectacularly futuristic. There are bone-white spaceships and skeletal furniture. In-flight films offer love scenes and judo. Dr. Floyd's daughter may come across on a televiewer,

but all she wants is a telephone and a bush baby.

Like the apes, starving to death in the midst of plenty, the men of **2001** are unaware of their world. A spiritual starvation and extinction seem imminent. Kubrick's portrait of contented, deceitful rationalists, bereft of feeling and dream, is appalling. The men sleep in pride. They suspect competition and the folks back home who need 'preparation and conditioning'. They trade congratulations, fake food and lies. Beneath the chatter are murderous suspicions and fears. The point is made in the lounge of the space station—another waterhole—where inquisitive Russian scientists twice offer Dr. Floyd a drink and are twice refused. All passion civilised, the scientists descend into a lunar excavation encased in artificial exoskeletons, but as unequipped as apes.

Such visual motifs run throughout **2001**. The metaphors define man as ape and tool-maker and killer, as tourist and child, as machine, and as very finite student of the universe. Little more than an animal, he contains the seed for potential growth of awareness, for transcendence of human limitations. The limitations are signalled in the metaphors. The tourists appear first in the desert aliens; next in the witty commercial flight to the Moon; then in the Jupiter Mission's spacewalks where man faces the immensity and emptiness of his new environment; and, ultimately, in the Grand Tour of the finale, Bowman's education precipitately advanced. The apes are embryonic, with the destructive emotions of children. There are five birthdays in the film, as well as games, songs and a sunbath. Weightlessness in space forces the travellers to learn to walk anew, and Bowman and Poole are solemn, precocious twins in HAL's motherly womb.

HAL is man-as-machine, at his most willing for self-enslavement in obsession. The film surrounds him with apes entrapped by their instincts and men who seem to have lost theirs in love of ritual. The consistent, subtle use of such visual motifs (for example, see the various inlets of perception, the eyes of ape, man, machine and superman) accounts to a large extent for the sustained power of several scenes, like the great set-piece of HAL's lobotomy with its recapitulation of metaphors. The tracking, somersaulting camera and floating, elliptically edited shots in the brain vault follow a frightened Bowman who must kill his predator, reducing a mad, possibly human computer to childish song, murdering Intelligence with a tiny key. The sophisticated brain began as a white bone and now sports a bone-white spaceship. Bowman floats in vacuum, the ultimate tourist.

The narrative thrust of **2001** comes from several mysterious appearances of the black monolith. Whatever its origin, the monolith's arrival amid the apes influences one of them to discover the tool, so it is partly a miraculous *deus ex machina*, offering a reprieve from extinction. Modern man could do with such a miracle, Kubrick implies. Moon-watcher's discovery takes place within a situation that demands change. Whatever causes it, the ability to change the external world is produced by an internal change, just as the new *Odyssey* will explore an inward world as it proceeds outward into the universe. In his use of the monolith, however, Kubrick combines two concepts. It is either an advanced civilisation's catalytic artifact, directing humanity towards true Intelligence; or it represents the natural principle behind Earthly evolution towards consciousness, an evolution offered in the film as awesome, deserving of our respect and wonder. Each appearance of the monolith but the last is accompanied by an astronomical conjunction of planets, satellites and Sun (as in the opening credits). Its alliance with natural forces is thus anticipated from the first.

The monolith is not only a device from the stars. It is the fiction in the science fiction, a device for stylising the description of age-long processes and distinguishing discrete stages in what could be a continuous evolutionary development. The appearance of the monolith amid the apes would be a stylised version of the birth of a new capacity for consciousness of Earth, of the birth of Time and Memory. Later, the appearance of the monolith among men will propose the need for a larger capacity still.

The monolith is a causal force, influencing the apes to use tools, directing the Moonmen towards Jupiter, indicating a Star Gate through a fifth dimension and presiding at the birth of a still higher Intelligence. In a sense, it is a concrete representation of the causal principle which we take for granted in works of narrative art. But the monolith is not only the source but the goal of human knowledge. What it does in the film is supplemented by reactions to its presence. The 'thing' of science fiction movies here is the partially perceived emanation of a Kantian 'thing-in-itself', a test of certain kinds of Intelligence. The discovery of the tool is the film's sign for nascent intellect. Both ape and man pass this technological

test for rationality, the men in their exploration of space.

In Clarke's novel, the monolith is a teaching machine which literally tests the man-apes before influencing them. Kubrick's film allows the audience to test the reactions of the animals to the extraordinary object. The appearance of the artifact among the apes is the most astonishing scene in the prologue. Because their surprise equals ours, because they evidence an intuitive apprehension of the monolith's singularity in their awed fascination and more than animal curiosity, we understand the hominoids' response as fitting, adequate. 'The Dawn of Man' impresses the audience with privileged knowledge about the monolith's significance; we can view subsequent events ironically. However much we take their placidity as professional cool, in the faculties of feeling and instinct the Moonmen are notably lacking. They explore in ignorance, a blind odyssey, poignant self-deception. On the Moon they approach the uncovered monolith slowly as a new dawn approaches. Instead of awed curiosity, there's a group photograph to certify a dim perception. The high frequency warning to the stars announces that an epidemic has indeed reached the Moon at last. The tourists fail part of our examination.

This test of sensibility pushes the debunking of technological progress one step farther. Not only are the men no more intelligent than the apes in their intuitive perception. They are less intelligent. The spacemen have exploited their rational talent: otherwise, part of the capacity granted the apes goes unfulfilled.

In the dialogue scenes of *2001*, knowledge about the monolith also becomes a test of sensibility. The republic feeds the 'big lie' to its people. The man-apes and the audience know more about the monolith than Dr. Floyd and HAL, who know more about it than Bowman, Poole, and the citizens of the Earth. Standing above them all, of course, are those extraterrestrials, Kubrick and Clarke. The hierarchy of knowledge about the monolith telescopes; the further we get into the movie, the less information is forthcoming from the characters themselves, until we end in HAL's brain, the last place to look. The expository BBC programme at the beginning of the 'Jupiter Mission' gives its viewers all the facts but the most important one: the Mission's true purpose, which is to follow the lunar monolith's signal in search of life off the Earth. With only the abrupt jump and sound cuts between the Moon excavation and the Discovery journeying through space, the audience is expected to sense the causal connection between signal and ship and also sense the absence of any confirmation of such a connection in the BBC broadcast. For its two-man crew, the scientific survey literally lacks significant purpose, just as the scientists fail to realise the full implications of their discovery. *2001* deliberately frustrates the narrative demands of its audience to demonstrate the failure.

In the Agel collection, Kubrick is quoted as saying: 'I tried to work things out so that nothing important was said in the dialogue...' The emotional atrophy of the spacemen appears in debased language, comic dialogue: another test of consciousness. Some early reviewers took the debasement as a failure of the film; but Kubrick puts language to complex use. Like the full time-lapse of

several scenes, the banal chatter certifies the everyday reality of human discourse, trivia in the presence of the extraordinary. The dialogue scenes are shot statically to increase our impatience with the duped characters; the technical jargon is pomposity in a vacuum.

Dr. Strangelove was filled with euphemisms and lies. In *2001*, insincere greetings and farewells, embarrassing silences and fragments of truth, tell part of the story. Perhaps language itself is an inadequate tool in the immensity of space, all emotion drained off, diminished. Or perhaps it mirrors the senile sensibilities of the men. The debasement of the English language in *2001* is the equivalent of that debased music—those sentimental love ballads—in *Paths of Glory* and *Dr. Strangelove*. It is a witty, sophisticated use of the Word.

3

If *2001*'s voyage to the Moon represents an equivalent to the prologue's scene of new sustenance, the war with HAL parallels the murder at the waterhole. Machine intelligence is the third category in the film's apparent four-part progression in Mind, and HAL is presumably an enhancement of present computer technology to the point of consciousness. The dialogue describes him as a 'conscious entity', and certainly HAL is the main character in the third movement of Kubrick's symphony, the most complex narrative in the film. HAL's all-too-human malfunction and madness may be a third regression from potential Intelligence. But the interesting question is whether HAL truly is a new capacity or merely the amplification of one of the human faculties of Intelligence.

'Jupiter Mission' is divided into three sequences: an expository introduction; the computer's report of an imminent communications breakdown, with the subsequent spacewalk and the astronauts' distrust; and HAL's murders and disconnection. Each sequence is introduced by a shot of the Discovery proceeding through space. But within this clear three-part structure, the characterisation of HAL remains ambiguous. Clarke is quoted by Agel as expressing dissatisfaction with Kubrick's portrait: 'I personally would like to have seen a rationale of HAL's behaviour.' Film and novel again diverge, but they share one obvious irony: that our first representative to contact extraterrestrial Intelligence may be as dehumanised as the computer ultimately is. Kubrick might revise this to 'always was'.

To some extent, Kubrick obviously expects his audiences to accept HAL as a character, a 'conscious entity', and the computer's voice, 'personality', lies, madness and murders work to convince us of his sentient power for destruction. HAL's mutiny could be an individual's specific rebellion (HAL has a 'twin' on earth) rather than a symbolic criticism of machine intelligence. But Kubrick has also insisted on HAL's symbolic role: 'One of the things we were trying to convey in this part of the film is the reality of a world populated—as ours soon will be—by machine entities who have as much, or more, intelligence as human beings and who have the same emotional potentialities...' We wanted to stimulate people to think what it would be like to share a planet with such creatures.'

If HAL is a portrait of a coming super-race,

why should the portrait reveal malevolence? In his novel, Arthur C. Clarke blames the mutiny on human emotion. Criticism of the film has tended to suggest that Clarke's novel is either the solution to all the film's ambiguities or beside the point. Obviously, the novel differs radically in emphasis and even basic conception, but at times Clarke's explanations throw light upon the film, if only through contrast. For Clarke, HAL errs because of the failure of his human programmers. The higher Intelligence falls to mere human feeling, insanity and murder because he is expected to lie to Bowman and Poole in withholding the news of the monolith's signal and the Mission's goal. Clarke insists HAL falls into guilt feelings and becomes humanly neurotic. Perhaps the achievement of a truly higher Intelligence is the fourth 'computer breakthrough' mentioned in the novel. But, for the novelist, human emotion destroys the achievement.

In Kubrick's film, it becomes clear that HAL's ambiguous role in the 'Jupiter

Tourist and toolmaker: artifacts of Kubrick's space age.



Mission' is a modern version of one of man's earliest imaginative conceits—of the inanimate invested with spirit, of the inhuman become conscious. The tree spirit, or the Golem, or the Frankenstein monster may never have existed, but HAL may exist one day. The automaton has been a constant figure in the works of romantic artists who have been fascinated for almost two centuries with the mechanical man, with the readiness of human beings to mechanise themselves, with the 'otherness' of sub- or superhuman states of consciousness. The automaton is always ambiguously machine, human and God.

Most contemporary audiences, conditioned by computers in science fiction and popular mythology, readily see HAL as sub-human, as machine. And it is possible to take HAL as merely a comic figure, as the intellect's pride brought low. Certainly the computer's efficiency makes him the ideal personification of the rationalist's hope for progress through technology. As a subhuman character, HAL's ironic resemblance to men who reduce themselves to machines is portrayed through madness and murders that are all too human. It is not necessary, then, to speak of HAL as an entity who is humanly, certifiably insane at the end of the Mission. 'Computer Malfunction' will do for a character whose comic advertisements for himself convince about as well as Poole's discovery that he has 'a bad feeling' about HAL. Kubrick's films have always dealt with characters who mechanised themselves: Mireau with his obsession with victory and punishment, Crassus in his search for the rebel, Humbert in his love for a nymphet. In 2001, the machine has its Mission.

But the machine also comes to seem quite human: 'That was a very enjoyable game'; 'I'm half crazy, all for the love of you'; 'I can feel it.' The official explanation has such diction facilitating discourse with the crew. Only HAL can know if he actually does feel. But the Jupiter voyage, in dramatising his relationship with Bowman and Poole, makes him at least their dramatic equal. And he conforms to one of the prologue's versions of man: he is a killer. Perhaps the Mission charts a truly conscious entity's fall into insanity. The spectacle of human personality produced through technology is hardly a comfortable one for viewers who hold the psyche to be unique, unapproachable by machine, even if those super-computers are themselves machine-made and untouched by human hands. And in HAL's madness (that diminished yellow pupil within the red iris) there is a suggestion of the proximity of human Intelligence to insanity.

It is the recognisably 'human' form of HAL's actions that has prompted audiences to search for motivations for the computer and allowed Clarke to see HAL as finally human in his madness. After all, HAL lies at least as well as Dr. Floyd. Perhaps, as Penelope Gilliatt has suggested, HAL's lie about the communications device is understandable as an attempt to regain the astronauts' trust with an even bigger lie. In the sequencing of the report of the error immediately following his interview with Bowman about 'something being dug up on the Moon', there is evidence to support such a theory as well as a subtle suggestion of Clarke's guilt-neurosis explanation. HAL's knowledge about the monolith is linked suggestively to his error-

lie, but Kubrick does not over-emphasise the link.

What is stressed throughout the third movement of 2001 is the possibility that HAL is a god. Many viewers reject this aspect, despite the structure of the film, despite the dazzling display boards of HAL's intellectual processes, despite his superhuman power for destruction. It is more comforting to dismiss the threat as comedy. But if Kubrick shows HAL to be subhuman or mere man, he also suggests that enhancement of intellect may be the goal of evolution. Even at the end of the Mission, Kubrick continues to play with the idea that HAL is at least conscious. Clarke would see his consciousness as potentially more than human. In his *Profiles of the Future*, he predicts the coming of a superhuman machine Intelligence and compares it to the greatest discoveries of human thought, 'like the discovery that the Earth moves round the Sun, or that man is part of the animal kingdom, or that $E = mc^2$. . . It will take a little while for men to realise that machines can not only think but may one day think them off the face of the Earth.' HAL may be such a god. If so, his actions would be inexplicable to the rest of us. His condescension is inevitable, his 'malevolence' a mortal's view of an immortal. If HAL is a god, then men are obviously only inefficient machines. Even if he falls to the human condition in a final inefficient madness, the fall contrasts that condition with the possibility of a superhuman ideal. The god becomes certifiably insane, and Kubrick again sensitises us to human limitations.

The god still has some recognisably human traits about him. In resisting disconnection, HAL acts with understandable motivation. Thus, by withholding and providing information about the motives of the computer, Kubrick forces the audience to accept him as at least its equal: even to question his reasons, to search for clues to his acts, is to be caught in Kubrick's dramatic trap for the unwary. Even a comic figure places some claims on the audience's need for human identification, and in that need is the central fascination of the automaton. We come to distrust one side of technology through our ultimate distrust of HAL.

The fluid ambiguity of HAL's nature recapitulates, holds in suspension, the potentialities for consciousness we have witnessed in the film's first three movements and accounts for his symbolic power: he becomes a truly mythic figure and the most original conception in 2001. To move toward any resolution of the ambiguity, it is necessary to go outside the Mission's narrative and to apply to the entire film's attitude towards the emotional faculties. As with the final scene of *Paths of Glory*, the content of the 'Jupiter Mission' demands comparison with what has preceded it, and if the film does resolve the question of whether HAL is our equal, our servant or our master, it does so through an implied contrast of the computer's character with the animals' impassioned response to the first appearance of the monolith and an implied comparison with the inadequate gestures of the Moonmen. Even before his error-lie, the super-computer is introduced with the Khachaturian lament. No Richard Strauss accompanies the appearance of HAL's machine-ancestor on the ferry to the space station—only one of Johann's old waltzes. To be at least human, HAL must not only

possess the power of abstract thought, but emotional faculties as well. Logical efficiency, vast memory and Big Brother perception are not enough.

If HAL is a god, then his fall to humanity is either inexplicable or a Platonist's demonstration of the destructiveness of the emotions. But the film sees the fear, curiosity and awe of the dawn-men as a valuable part of human Intelligence. HAL may finally indicate the source of the ills of the spacemen: he may be their machine-ape model, a false god, and the sentient expression of those matched shots of bone and satellite, of technological talent and emotional atrophy. In total context, the computer may be no superman, merely the extension of one human faculty, the intellect, and the 'Jupiter Mission' may reveal the extent of the scientists' self-deception in trusting this god. But at the same time the grotesque extension mimics sentience in all power, like a dangerously armed child, and the power and moral insanity freeze our laughter, like Dr. Strangelove in the war room. The odyssey that begins in the memory of an ape ends in a computer's brain, and Kubrick questions the apparent progress.

HAL's lobotomy forces us to watch what may be the extinction of Intelligence apart from physical destruction or biological death. Just as the 'Jupiter Mission' allows us to speculate on the possibility of consciousness outside biological evolution, the finale of 2001 can be taken as a representation of a Platonic Intelligence beyond matter. If the film rejects HAL as a superman, then the embryo-extraterrestrial is either a further biological development in the evolution Mind or perhaps a supra-biological step through contact with an advanced civilisation.

2001 offers an apparently simple progressive structure only to undermine, complicate and traduce that structure through signs of contrasting regression. Even in the final movement of the film, Bowman is faced with a regression from youth to age before a last-minute rescue. The central devolution of the work is an imbalance between human faculties of intellect and emotion, a balance restored in Bowman's capacity for both calculation and feeling as demonstrated in his reaction to the death of Poole and his fear and anger in heroically re-entering the ship and disconnecting HAL. The gesture may be followed by a Grand Tour that places it in context against an infinite universe, but 2001 holds out the possibility for heroism in the development and integration of human faculties in the face of the infinite. However limited man's capacity for Intelligence may be, the species has explored only certain of its given talents, failed to be heroically human, by retreating instead in accepting the intellect's palliatives and technology's playthings.

Our view of the film's structure, then, depends on our view of HAL. Rather than an immediate progression in Intelligence following the lunar monolith's appearance, a progression arguing for intellectual advance, the audience may have to wait for the Jupiter monolith and the hotel room's final door. Rather than a clear four-part progression, HAL's narrative frustrates the expectation of advance, surprising the viewer with a deceptive structure. The film would therefore open with a true step in biological evolution, then portray two further 'progressions' as limited,

deceptive, before an authentic progression in the finale. In this exposition, variation and recapitulation, **2001** asserts the value of non-rational modes of knowledge.

4

To examine **2001**'s exploitation of received ideas is to see one kind of sense in the film, to find point and pattern in the spectacular variety. **2001** reminds us that movies can retell ancient myths in new ways, with fresh emblems for old truths. The film insists upon the primacy of visual expression, much like the contemporary emphasis on 'pure' dance as the essential expressive element in ballet, and both movements have caused displeasure to those sensibilities who demand 'complex' characterisation, dramatic conflict and 'explanation' rather than the innocent pleasures of visual art. But the misunderstanding is not only one of difference in sensibility but of disappointment in encountering a new cinematic form in **2001** rather than a comfortably recognisable formula. Kubrick's 'symphonic' structure disciplines his spectacle just as the philosophical and scientific concepts find illustration throughout.

The 'ideas' are hardly esoteric. The ape-man-superman progression is signalled three times by the Richard Strauss quotation. There is no announcement that those man-apes are starving, but the desert skeleton and leopard indicate a racial crisis. No narrator explains that the lunar monolith's high frequency signal is activated by solar energy. The conjunctive cooperation of star, planet and moon suggests a more fundamental cause. And Clarke's novel revealed that the trip 'Beyond the Infinite' visualises a well-known concept in science fiction: a corridor in a fifth dimension that would permit short-lived humans interstellar travel. Kubrick's camera tilts up from Jupiter as the Grand Tour begins. No narration is needed; yet remember those critics who posited the odyssey's farthest point as Jupiter when the director had clearly and triumphantly hurled his astronaut beyond the stars.

Kubrick has warned that his spectacle cannot be reduced to an allegorical system or explained away with pat intellectual concepts. For its creator, **2001** makes another, perhaps more important, kind of 'sense', and categories won't do for a work that attempts to become a new category entire. To write about the movie may be to betray the continuum of ambiguity and feeling that is the experience of watching **2001**. There is little time for analysis while the film is being screened; merely following all that Kubrick lavishly provides, reacting to the sensuous surface, is challenge enough. The rationale comes later.

A film like **2001** reveals the discrepancy between the experience and the rationale, between the generative ideas behind the work and the sensed result. As Nabokov will explode a platitude into a full-blown fiction, Kubrick uses received ideas as pretext. The substance of the work is in the style, in those irrational perceptions evoked by the spectacle's sensuous texture. In a film that criticises the loss of wonder and awe in modern man, it is hardly surprising to find the director exploiting a potential in his art that can evoke the very emotions 'allegorised' in his subject. Kubrick makes his spectacle his subject.

Kubrick has resisted verbal explication of his films since *Paths of Glory*. In a 1959 interview with Colin Young, he is quoted as saying: 'Films deal with emotions and reflect the fragmentation of experience. It is thus misleading to try to sum up the meaning of a film verbally.' The voice-over narrators in *Paths of Glory*, *Spartacus*, *Lolita* and *Dr. Strangelove* have disappeared in **2001**. By removing easy labels, trusting his ability to express visually rather than to explain verbally, Kubrick forces a fresh response from the viewer. Labels can anaesthetise us to reality, and art can overcome the limitations of rational discourse to confront the viewer with emotional truths. **2001** reveals a new significance to be felt in space exploration. We feel the insignificance of man in space during the EVA's. The Moon scientists accept a comforting label for the monolith—'one of the most significant discoveries in the history of science'—but the label is inadequate. Language lies about the monolith. The dispassionate aesthetic emotions evoked by **2001** will confuse rationalists who wish to domesticate or merely patronise art. Kubrick's film provides a rationalist critic in HAL, who compliments Bowman's primitive, representational drawings. But then HAL's emotions seem almost as negligible as the men's, and his world abounds in labels.

Thus, however fascinating in its structure and symbolism, **2001**'s final power resides in its individual shots and sequences. The film's themes, a century later so similar to the tenets of American Transcendentalism, generate images that are more than heroic. As in a Balanchine ballet, energy becomes matter, the precise detail frozen in a moving architecture. Those realistic man-apes touch a sensitive chord in the consciousness. Ah yes, we say, that's how it is. The images resonate with paradoxical meanings: Moonwatcher, murdering bone in hand, is both hideous and grand. The Panavision 70 camera seeks to encompass the size of space

but cannot, and so sweeps, tilts or simply waits. There are 'unknown images' like the cross formation of monolith and moons above Jupiter, the spiritual and phenomenal cojoined, the monolith an ancient symbol of eternal unity in a fragmented world. The universe turns inside-out to reveal stellar clusters, star-stuff, and seven diamonds. On the planet that parodies Earth, the ambassador's room is in fake Earth-green, and Kubrick's simple mime for Bowman includes a meal that finds the man pathetically accepting the old sustenance and the shattered fragments of a fragile glass.

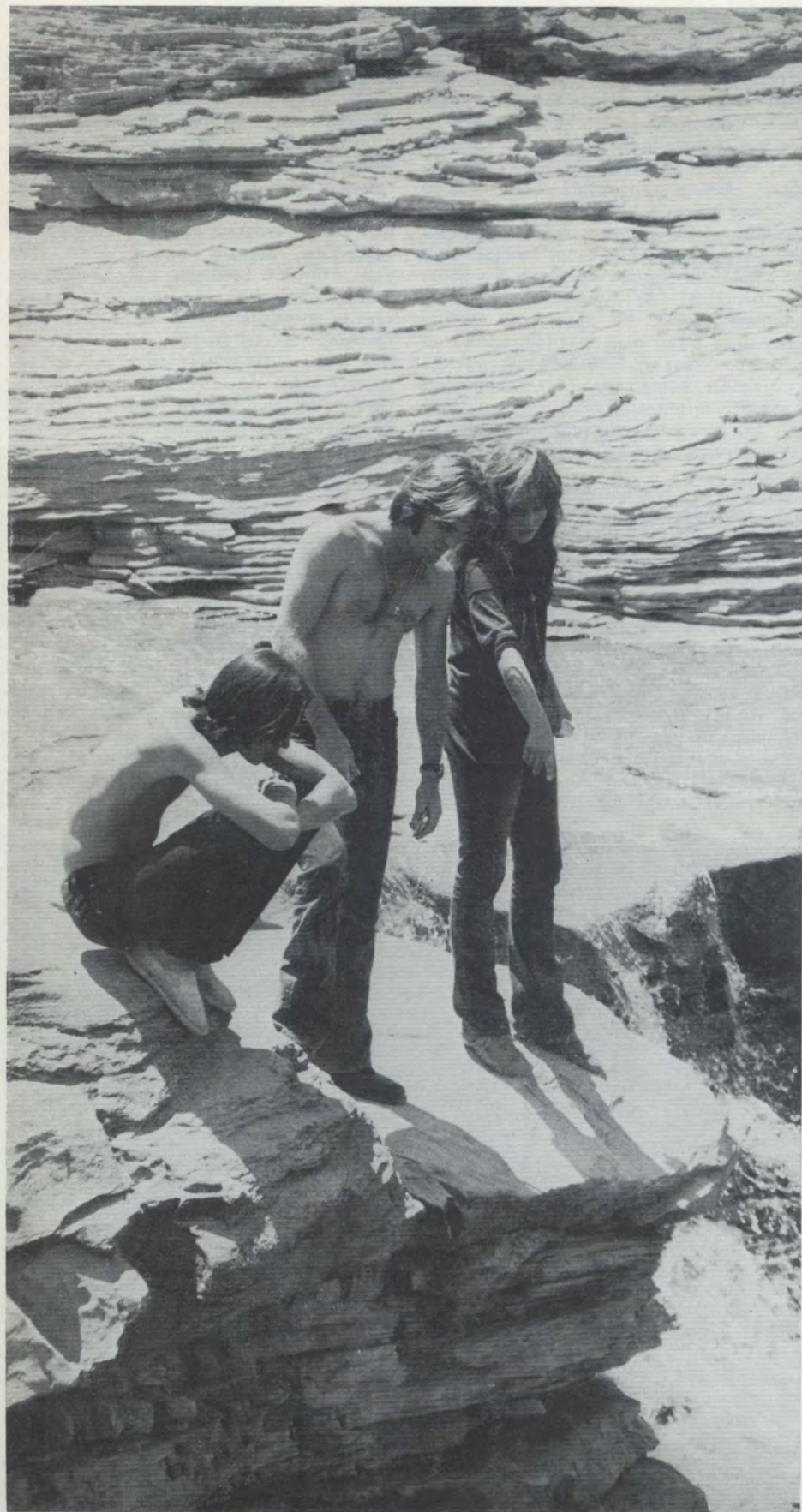
We can guess at the alternative provided in the film's last shots from the portrait of the dilemma. The superman will be an extra-terrestrial, a youth rather than a child, a native of space rather than a tourist, and an Intelligence beyond man and machine. He will be beyond our meagre conception of space-time, perhaps beyond death. The eyes of the new Intelligence are trapped in a human form, like Moonwatcher's human eyes in an animal's body, but not for long. Ontogeny briefly imitates phylogeny, and this embryo represents an entire species' coming birth. As such, it is also a moving emblem of the human mind's ability to imagine its own transcendence.

Kubrick is now making Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*. Eventually, he hopes to film his long-planned *Napoleon*. In sadistic gangs, conditioned automatons and repressive governments, in the foremost modern 'hero', it is possible to find resemblances to thematic concerns in Kubrick's previous films. But **2001** is departure and advance sufficient to discourage easy prophecy. As late as *Dr. Strangelove*, it was possible for some critics to dismiss Kubrick as a talented *enfant terrible*. After **2001**, that is no longer sufficient. Kubrick's next films can be approached as a master's works. Watching him explore the possibilities of his art is one of the contemporary cinema's few sustained pleasures.



TWO-LANE BLACKTOP

'Two-Lane Blacktop': Dennis Wilson, James Taylor, Laurie Bird.



Beverly Walker

As the director-as-superstar cult has tightened its grip on American cineastes, and the search is on for new heroes, the name Monte Hellman is beginning to pop up increasingly frequently in film magazines and periodicals. Even though most readers of these publications have never seen a film by Hellman, they are embracing the mystique of the director and his two existentialist Westerns that no American distributor will buy. While making his first film in five years, *Two-Lane Blacktop*, Hellman was the subject of major pieces in both Los Angeles newspapers, as well as the Sunday *New York Times*, the ultimate recognition in American journalism. The L. A. *Times*' bold headline, 'Monte Hellman and Hollywood's Best Kept Secret' startled that city's citizens, who had never heard of the man and certainly didn't think anything in their town could be a secret. The town was buzzing for days after the appearance of the article, in which Kevin Thomas called Hellman 'one of the most interesting directing talents to emerge in Hollywood in the past decade.'

Hellman is the latest of several American film-makers to have his initial reputation made in France. His case is more unusual, however, in that the films upon which the current interest is based, *The Shooting* and *Ride the Whirlwind*, have never been released theatrically in their own country, although since they first attracted attention when shown out of competition at Cannes in 1966 one or the other of them has been screened at almost every international festival extant. (Most recently: Edinburgh in 1970.)

The circumstances in which the films were made are as remarkable as the films themselves. Backed by Roger Corman and produced by Hellman and Jack Nicholson, the two films were made back-to-back in Utah in the summer of 1965. Costing 75,000 dollars apiece, they were made in three weeks each with a non-union crew of ten plus a couple of local wranglers to take care of the horses. The equipment consisted of two cameras, two reflectors, one beat-up station-wagon and a small utility truck. Neither of the trucks could go off the road, so all the equipment had to be carried to the locations by foot or on horseback. To make matters worse, the crust on the desert surface broke easily, making it necessary to change the set-up slightly after each take. The actors, friends of Hellman and Nicholson, had joined the project in a spirit of adventure which soon began to wear thin. The days were long and hot; nobody got much money. *The Shooting* was made first and nobody could quite understand the bizarre script. They had been coaxed to Utah to make a quick, low-budget Western, but this one wasn't quite like anything they'd seen before. Hellman and his art director parted company after the first film. He did not see one foot of film during shooting, creating a profound sense of unease in his cameraman, Gregory Sandor.

Hellman spent six months editing the

films and then showed them to Roger Corman. It is not known what Corman thought of their artistic merits, but he surely must have realised what an odd pair he had on his hands. American International declined to put up the amount of money Corman was asking (reputedly 150,000 dollars) so the festival route was decided upon as a means of interesting other distributors.

After Nicholson took the films to Cannes in 1966, the French rights were sold to a distributor who subsequently went bankrupt. The dupe negatives as well as the legal rights in France were tied up for nearly a year before the films finally opened there to critical acclaim. The Walter Reade organisation finally bought them for America and sold them direct to television. There has been conjecture as to why they were never released theatrically, but the fact is that the sale came through the company's West Coast television division, so it appears they never seriously intended to release them in theatres. Since that time, Hellman and a group of investors have bought back the 35mm. rights and are trying to negotiate a release.

The films are indeed remarkable, not only for production values which in view of how they were made make Hellman seem something of a wizard, but for an almost obsessive personal vision unusual in any American film and particularly a Western. Not really 'likeable', the films are startling and discomforting in their nihilism and oddly detached objectivity. Terse and pared to the bone, they offer none of the orthodox Western entertainment values. Action is minimal, rugged individualism is out, and nobody wins.

The Shooting was written by Adrien Joyce (who has since come to prominence with *Five Easy Pieces*) and features Warren Oates, Will Hutchins, Millie Perkins and the then unknown Jack Nicholson. Extremely complicated and quirky in its story development, it tells of a man, Gashade (Oates), who returns home to find a murder which involves his twin brother, Coigne—now missing. Suddenly a woman appears on foot, out of nowhere, and hires Gashade to escort her to a distant town for an unknown purpose. Gashade reluctantly agrees ('I've got my reasons') but insists his simpleminded sidekick, Coley, accompany him. The trio set out in hostile, awkward silence, and are soon joined by Billy Spear (Nicholson), evidently the woman's hired gun and possibly her lover. In one of the film's most chilling moments, a perfectly realised visual evocation of its theme, the three men, on their horses, chase each other around and around in a circle until Spear kills Coley. In the film's final minutes, Gashade crushes Spear's gun-hand in a brutal fight and goes after the woman, who has abandoned her horse and is following a trail of footprints up a hill. We briefly glimpse a figure at the top and realise that it is Coigne, Gashade's twin. Gunshots follow in which Coigne attempts to kill the woman—or possibly his brother—and the woman kills Coigne. The final image is of Billy Spear, dazed, his hand dangling uselessly by his side, walking towards the hill under the broiling sun. None of the questions are ever answered; and, finally, are irrelevant.

Written by Jack Nicholson and starring himself, Cameron Mitchell and Millie

Perkins, *Ride the Whirlwind* is a simpler film than *The Shooting* although thematically identical. Here we have a pair of ordinary cowboys (Nicholson and Mitchell) who inadvertently become implicated in a murder they did not commit, flee to avoid a vigilante hanging party, and eventually murder an innocent man to avoid being caught. One of them dies along the way and the other is seen riding off in a cloud of dust to nowhere.

The spare screenplay was based upon Nicholson's extensive research into diaries and records of the period, a bleak time when justice rested upon the presumptions of the largest number of people. The stylised, archaic dialogue, although sometimes a bit self-consciously spoken, adds to the feeling of authenticity which spreads through the film.

In each of the films, an immediate atmosphere of terror is stated with great economy. A freshly-dug grave is a premonition of coming violence. A quick shot of the moving wheels of a stagecoach over a rocky road brings us closer to a yet unknown confrontation. A tired horse's whinny reminds us that it, too, is made of flesh and blood. The lunar-like landscape, reminiscent of Antonioni but infinitely tougher, leaves a man exposed and vulnerable. Again and again, Hellman cuts to extreme close-ups, to reveal a glance, a sigh, weariness. We never learn more about the people than what we see—but no matter. Hellman brings us right into their lives at that point in time and we are compelled to care about them.

Born in New York and raised in California, Hellman graduated from Stanford University in speech and drama and went on to do graduate work in cinema at UCLA. For the first several years after school he worked in theatre, directing the first West Coast production of *Waiting for Godot*. Roger Corman was impressed by the production and offered Hellman the chance to direct a movie. His first film, then, was *Beast from Haunted Cave*, made in 1959 and released by Corman's company, Film Group.

He spent the next couple of years doing

second unit work for Corman, expanding films for television and directing almost half of *The Terror*. In 1963, after working as an assistant editor at Universal, he went to the Philippines to make two films for the producer Robert Lippert, *Back Door to Hell*, starring Jimmy Rodgers, and *Flight to Fury*, with Jack Nicholson, Dewey Martin and Faye Spain. Then came the Westerns, in 1965.

A number of abortive projects followed, and only now, five years later, has Hellman had the chance to direct again. He was brought to *Two-Lane Blacktop* by producer Michael S. Laughlin (*The Whisperers*, *Joanna* and the unreleased *Christian Licorice Store*). Cinema Center Films was to finance the film, part of a two-picture deal with Laughlin. The original story by Will Corry, about two men, one black and one white, who drive across country followed by a young girl, seemed to Hellman 'interesting but not fully realised'; a new script was written in four weeks by Rudolph Wurlitzer, a young Eastern intellectual best known for a strange book called *Nog* which enjoyed a considerable underground reputation.

In February 1970 Hellman took to the road to pick his locations and was a few weeks away from the start of shooting when Cinema Center abruptly cancelled the project. Major studios which Hellman approached were all impressed by the script but had their own ideas about casting and how to make it. Finally it was Ned Tanen, a young executive at Universal supervising a new slate of pictures for the studio (Dennis Hopper's *The Last Movie*, Peter Fonda's *The Hired Hand*, Milos Forman's *S.P.F.C.* and Frank Perry's *Diary of a Mad Housewife*) who gave Hellman 850,000 dollars to make the picture his way. As with all Tanen's projects, the director has right to final cut.

Shooting began on August 13th in Los Angeles and continued for six weeks as the crew of thirty moved in a gypsy-like caravan through the southwest towards Memphis, Tennessee. *Two-Lane Blacktop* is now the story of four displaced people, three men and a girl, speeding across the United States in a superstock '55 Chevrolet and an orange

'The Shooting'.





'The Shooting': Warren Oates, Jack Nicholson



Above and below: Millie Perkins, Jack Nicholson, Warren Oates in 'The Shooting'



Below: 'Ride the Whirlwind'



Pontiac G.T.O. It stars singer-composer James Taylor, Warren Oates, Dennis Wilson (drummer with the Beach Boys) and newcomer Laurie Bird. The cameraman was Gregory Sandor, who also shot the Westerns.

This interview with Hellman was done a few days after he completed shooting.

Were you a frequent moviegoer as a child?

I guess I went to my first movie at the age of four. They became part of my fantasy world... I was more seriously interested in the theatre. I started acting in junior high school and went to Stanford on an NBC radio scholarship. I began to direct radio plays in my freshman year—things like *War of the Worlds*—and then to direct stage plays. I wanted to go into radio, but nobody was interested. They advised me to go out and direct theatre in some small town, and I had an offer from a stock company in northern California and went there.

What prompted you to go to the UCLA cinema school right after Stanford?

I'd always been interested in photography. I had built my own enlarger when I was about fourteen and I was always shooting pictures and printing them myself. I started shooting portraits and making money at it while I was still in high school. But I eventually got into films by accident. After three seasons of stock our company folded, and I came back to Hollywood and had to find work to support a new wife. I took a job cleaning out the film vaults at ABC for 55 dollars a week. It was a union job and that's how I got into the film editors union. I stayed at ABC for a few months and worked in film shipping and eventually began cutting commercials into shows.

Did you learn cutting at UCLA?

I guess so, but it didn't matter. They can teach you in an hour. After ABC, I went to work on *The Medic*, a television show, as an apprentice editor. Somebody left and I was temporarily promoted to assistant editor. I stayed there awhile and then went to work at Ziv Studios, where I was coding dailies and all sorts of tedious things. I finally got fed up and left to start a theatre.

What about your first film, BEAST FROM HAUNTED CAVE?

Fools plunge in... I just did it, and I probably made more mistakes than the average person who makes a first film. I didn't really have any help and I wouldn't take any help. I had to do it on my own. Once I made my first film I considered myself a film-maker. I lost all interest in the theatre and never went back. After *Beast from Haunted Cave* opened I got an agent and tried to find directing assignments, but nobody was interested until I got the offer from Robert Lippert to make two pictures.

Was FLIGHT TO FURY the beginning of your association with Jack Nicholson?

Before that, Jack and I had written a script called *Epitaph*: a semi-autobiographical thing about life on the fringes of Hollywood, a young actor knocking about, with a story about a couple of days in which a guy tries to raise money to get his girl an abortion. It would have been the first of the abortion movies... that was still a taboo subject. Roger (Corman) had offered to back it, but we went to the Philippines first.

How did the Westerns come about?

I was finishing cutting on *Flight to Fury*,

and we went to Roger one more time for money for *Epitaph*. He was afraid it was too downbeat: at that time there was a prejudice that you could make that kind of movie in Europe but not in America. But he said that if we wanted to make something commercial he would finance that. So we said 'What's commercial,' and he said, 'Well, a Western is commercial. My first movie was a Western and I still believe in Westerns.' So we said 'Okay'. Then he said, 'Well, if you're going to make one Western, you might as well make two.'

So we rented an office and decided that Jack would write one and we would get someone else to write another. Several friends submitted ideas. Adrien Joyce submitted a script that wasn't producible but was very interesting, and I had faith in her talent so we decided to go with her. She did some research and came up with a story by Jack London. It was about a couple of guys who were looking at a painting in a bar—a moment of crisis in which somebody is shot—and they were talking about how interesting it is to observe a scene like that and not know anything about what happened before or after... and how much that's like life. One of the men says that something like that once happened to him. He was hired by a woman to take her across the snows and he never knew where they were going, or why, and finally at the end of several weeks they saw a man ahead of them in a sled. She told him to go faster. When they got close to the man she pulled out a gun and started to shoot at him. And killed him. Then she paid the driver off and he never saw her again.

And that was the start of THE SHOOTING. How involved were you in the development of both scripts?

I was with Jack every day but less involved with Adrien. Jack and I just sat in our office and he wrote the script. Once we had agreed on the basic structure of Adrien's story, she simply began writing, without really knowing who the characters would be or how it would develop. She would show me about 15 pages at a time and I would comment: she just wanted to know if she was going in the right direction. Jack also writes in an evolutionary sort of way, and I find that an exciting way to work. Jack is a very black person, very wry and funny but very cynical, and I'm sure that appeals to me.

How conscious were you when making the Westerns that they would be somewhat bizarre?

I don't think we really thought anybody would ever see the films. We thought they would be a couple more Roger Corman movies that would play on the second half of a double bill somewhere. So any thoughts about doing something different were for our own personal satisfaction. We never thought that anybody would ever notice.

You have said that you set out to debunk certain myths...

We hated the predictability of certain situations. For example, the scene where Jack takes Millie out to the barn (in *Whirlwind*). That's an obligatory scene—you expect some kind of sexual thing. Ours was totally non-sexual.

What have you been doing since the Westerns?

I've done a lot of editing; I edited *The Wild Angels* and I worked as a dialogue director on *The St. Valentine's Day Massacre* with Roger. I was hired by Roger and

AIP to direct *Explosion*, a film about a black sheriff in the South, but they became afraid of the subject matter and decided not to do it. And I was hired to do the movie of *MacBird*.

I find that a very strange choice on your part.

Well, I didn't go headlong into it, but I found a way to do it that I thought would be interesting. I went to San Francisco to write the screenplay with Barbara Garson. The studio didn't like our screenplay—they wanted Bob Altman to do it. But Barbara wouldn't do it without me. The project had to be discarded when Bobby Kennedy was assassinated.

What interested you in the original script for TWO-LANE BLACKTOP? And what did you think was missing?

The fact is that I've never been presented with a script I liked. Here I liked the idea of two guys travelling across the country in a '55 Chevy challenging guys to race. The rest of it was banal.

What intrigued you about Wurlitzer's writing?

I liked his sense of humour. He was extremely funny. I think all my scripts are funny.

Do you think your films are funny?

Yes, *The Shooting* set out to be a comedy... and I still think it is.



'Two-Lane Blacktop': Monte Hellman (left) filming in the rain.

Why did you decide not to let the actors read the script, and to give them dialogue pages only on the day of shooting? Warren Oates told me that you didn't work this way on the Westerns.

When my wife, Jackie, and I were working on *Explosion*, we began work with the actors that way. And they contributed a lot to the script. I wanted to leave myself open to that possibility here. I work with an actor or a writer the same way, which is really anonymously: I act as a catalyst, make them do all the work, but try to give them a lot of confidence so that they will feel free to say or do anything. On this film, I figured that if they knew what the written script was, the actors wouldn't be able to improvise.

But in fact almost no improvising took place.

That's right. It turned out that way.

The actors complained bitterly about not being allowed to read the script. Were you aware of this?

I knew fairly soon that they were uncomfortable. I wouldn't work that way again with someone like James (Taylor). He's very intellectual, so nothing would be lost in letting him read the script.

Another point of contention was that you

insisted on going cross country when so much of the action takes place inside the two cars.

I thought it would be the only way of convincing the audience that we actually travelled across the country. That we would never get the feeling of covering that ground unless we actually did it. Beyond that, I knew it would affect the actors—and it did, obviously. It affected everybody.

To what extent do you work as an editor while shooting?

I shoot as an editor to the extent that I am limited by money and time. I say, well, I've got this part of the scene in this take, and this part in this one and so on. I may never get the performance on the set but I know I can build it in the cutting-room. If I were a more perfect director, I wouldn't have as much fun in the cutting-room.

TWO-LANE BLACKTOP is going to be like the Westerns in the sense that it contains one man's view of things, and that is your view. How do you manage this?

I couldn't define what view of life I impose, but I do know, after the fact, that I have somehow managed to get several different writers to do scripts with a similar point of view. I don't know how conscious my objective ever is, but I think I have a feeling for the fulfilment aspects of films and what an audience should ideally get from a movie. For me, one of the most perfect movie stories is *The Graduate*. If I can get that perfect an empathetic situation into a film, then I'm happy. I know I have something basic that can't help but psychologically satisfy an audience. As well as myself.

What were you after in this film?

I was interested in what has happened to love, for one thing. What contemporary attitudes towards love are as opposed to traditional attitudes, and how much romance is left in a non-romantic world... I don't know how much is left in the world, but there's a lot left in our movie. We're in a world where love has been rejected, but people still have a nostalgia for it, and I think that's what we deal with in this film.

Are you a romantic?

I'm romantic in the sense that Camus was romantic. I... feel a nostalgia for what cannot be.

Would you describe BLACKTOP as a love story? Who loves whom?

I always felt it was a love story. The girl loves the driver; the mechanic loves the girl and the driver, and he can't decide between them and can't accept his love for either. And the driver wants to love the girl, but can't.

I've always felt there was a profound absence of love in BLACKTOP...

Well, I've expressed these things to Rudy, but I don't know if he wrote exactly that story... Maybe audiences will see it differently, too. But I've always seen the driver as the same sort of character that Aznavour plays in *Tirez sur le Pianiste*. He appeals to me too. It's a guy who is so involved with his own existential dilemma, just dealing with himself as a person, that he throws away the thing he wants most, which is love. He can't deal with those needs in time, and that becomes his tragedy.

You don't think the cars, the roads, and the quintessential Americanness of the characters are significant?

That's just a cultural appendage... side effects. A way to augment the reality.

You haven't mentioned one of the two major characters, G.T.O. (played by Warren Oates). What function does he serve?

G.T.O. is time... God, that sounds pretentious. Look, I'm evolving, I'm getting older. My films have to reflect this. G.T.O.'s function is as a reference to the process of time. A reminder of mortality. The idea of time is a double-edged element. The illusion and delusion of time... Cars, roads, speed are one thing. G.T.O. sings 'Time Is On My Side'. Well, it's not. And the love thing is involved with him too. The temporal nature of love, or at least of sexual love. He has been through it. He's part of the generation gap.

There is a confusion in people's minds about what the essential elements of a movie are. We create 'genres'—the road picture, the melodrama, the Western... I don't think those are good categories. Certain movies are made over and over again, each through a different director's vision. The prototypes for *Blacktop* are Minnelli's *The Clock*, Lelouch's *Un Homme et une Femme*, Nichols' *The Graduate*, Wilder's *The Apartment*. They are all the same story, told against a different background.

A recurring pattern in your films is the use of games. Is this a deliberate device?

It wasn't a conscious thing to begin with. Well, Jack and I talked about it in *Flight to Fury*. But in *Beast from Haunted Cave* there's a slot machine and there is a game of solitaire. In *The Shooting* there's the game of getting the buckshot into a hole. And in *Blacktop* we have the pin-ball machine and pool. I wanted those.

Those games are kind of heavy, aren't they?

Well, yes, I guess so... I love the oriental gambling game in *Flight to Fury* with cards—weird cards with strange pictures on them. A dealer with long, polished fingernails peels off one card at a time. As a little bit of the picture is revealed, people can begin to tell whether they've won or lost. It's really exciting.

Do those games sum up your view of things? The pointlessness of life.

I don't know... I think it's best expressed in *Flight to Fury*, when Jack is asked what is this preoccupation with games, and he says, I just like to play.

Maybe, but it seems to me you have a very black point of view. You present a world where there is no justice, or mercy or hope, and where a man's fate is completely dependent upon accidental things. Has anything in your own life contributed to this feeling?

I don't think that the kind of feelings I have come from personal fortunes or misfortunes: they really come from how you are affected by the world. It's there for everyone to see, and some people are more sensitive to certain aspects of it than other aspects.

What directors or films do you especially like? Who has influenced you?

At the time I began making films, the directors who influenced me most were John Huston and Carol Reed. If I had to list what I thought were the greatest films I'd ever seen, I'd say *8½* and *Persona*. But I don't think Fellini or Bergman influenced me: the influences took place earlier. As far as my taste in subject matter goes, my favourite film of all time is Carol Reed's *Outcast of the Islands*. I'm really attracted to the black side of Huston and Reed: I guess every film I've made has been either *The Maltese Falcon* or *Outcast of the Islands*.

the third revolution



A strip of EVR tape

Axel Madsen

The socio-scientific jargon may vary somewhat, but it is agreed that we are moving into a post-industrial era in which human needs tend to shift from materialism towards a desire for self-realisation. After providing material satisfactions, affluent technological societies must now concern themselves with spiritual gratification—one of the central themes of the super-industrial revolution which, we are told, will soon reduce the conflict between capitalism and socialism to comparative insignificance.

A society fast fragmenting at the level of values and life styles demands a corresponding diversity of art, recreation, entertainment, education and psychiatric services. As we move from homogeneity to heterogeneity, mass communications are 'demassified'. The cinema—at least in major metropolises—is no longer a matter of crowds but of eclecticism. The commercial versus art house dualism is exploding into an ever-varying range of cinema subjects and treatments catering to ever-specialising audiences. Now comes the real audience-splitter: the one that, by 1975, could have us all at home playing our favourite reel of *Queen Christina* over and over again on our television set.

The godfathers standing over the new-born video cartridge or cassette are as many as their predictions are optimistic. The first two waves of the electronic age—radio and television—are still being absorbed. But the video cassette, we are assured, will act as an even more dramatic transformer of cultural habits.

For years, electronics engineers in the United States, Europe and Japan have been busily perfecting a new medium by which prerecorded video cassettes play through a television set anything that can now be

received on it. Now the shock waves are running up and down corporate spines in film, music, theatre, publishing, journalism and television, and financial empires are predicted to be about to rise and fall. In short, the equivalent of the paperback revolution in publishing is right around the corner, since anything that can be seen, heard or read will find its way into this new medium. Hollywood will again become boomtown; indeed the entire entertainment industry—if that is what we should continue to call it—will know untold prosperity. Or,

say others, this is Alexandre Astruc's 'caméra-stylo' becoming a reality, with all of us exchanging typewriters for video cameras and cinema art finally freeing itself from economic conditioning. 'Think publishing,' say some video enthusiasts. 'No allmighty industry, or studios, but a group of cartridge makers "publishing" quite mechanically individual works.'

Like the movies before the 35mm., four-sprockets-per-frame standardisation of 1889, or colour television before government decisions in favour of one of several systems (RCA's in North America; France's Secam, etc.), the video cartridge world is at present a disconcerting if joyous confusion.

A movie projector—8, 16, 35 or 70mm.—can unspool an M-G-M movie or a Sovexport release, just as a record-player can play both Verve and Deutsche Grammophon labels. But a Sony cassette cannot snap into an Avco or Colorvision player. Yet, the stakes are high. By 1980, officials of Radio Corporation of America (RCA) are expecting the new industry to reach one billion dollars in revenue. Less conservative forecasters, such as Sony's Shigemi Nakano, put the figure at five times that sum. Briefly, the competitive line-up:

Magnetic Tape has video tape running through a standard TV set as easily as today's audio cassettes. Sony of Japan is the pacesetter, and Telefunken, Grundig and Philips

—but *not* Avco in the U.S.—are aligning on cassette interchangeability. Magnetic tapes seem likely to be a short-term winner only, however, because the system relies on the consumer's presumed desire to record off live TV.

Super 8. Germany's NordMende, Britain's Vidicord and, in the United States, Technicolor, Bell and Howell, Fairchild and Kodak, are making sealed, self-winding reels or continuous loop cartridges which will play through a special unit into a TV set. Also a short-term winner, Super 8's main drawback is probably its stiff price.

Vinyl tape. Developed by RCA and given the unappealing trade-name SelectaVision, this process combines laser beams and holography. A sophisticated late-starter.

Miniaturised film. Aggressively marketed by CBS, Electronic Video Recording (EVR) is relatively inexpensive, but easy to copy. Invented by Peter Goldmark, the father of the LP record, EVR is the first on the market, and Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) expects that by the end of 1971 it will have sold 100,000 players and three million cartridges—primarily to educational users.

Plastic disks. The most sophisticated and latest system is being rushed into development by Decca and Telefunken-AEG. Trade-named Teldec, it would be the cheapest of them all, but so far lacks colour.



RCA's video player, on top of regular colour TV set.

RCA and CBS are near-monopolies, and industry insiders already predict that the big battle of the mid-70s will be between the systems backed by these two corporate giants, with SelectaVision the ultimate winner (RCA also won the colour television battle with CBS in the 1960s). Why? Because it is generally agreed that the battle is not in the hardware (system X versus system Y) but in the software (the cassettes finally on the shelf of your record shop or drugstore). Indeed, what message *will* the new medium deliver? Pop festivals or *Hamlet*, Broadway musicals, symphony concerts, highlights of the World Cup, or 'How to' series on cooking and sex education? Or *War and Peace* unabridged (not running three-and-a-half hours, like the King Vidor film, or six hours, like the Russian, but a 67-hour or whatever it takes version)? Or will the pressures of competing systems lead

inevitably to mass market conformism?

Curiously, Sony of Japan, which will produce 50,000 players in 1971 and 500,000 in 1972, has no intention of getting into the software, although it is here that the Big Two are concentrating their thrust. CBS, for example, has a huge inventory of programming which can quickly be put on EVR cartridges. It has a big production staff in its network departments that can be geared up to produce programming for the cartridge format. The storehouse of information from years of experience in production and marketing, together with the Columbia record and music divisions, are other assets. In 1967, CBS acquired the publishing house of Holt, Rinehart and Winston and two educational film producing companies. Add to this a vast reservoir of talent under TV and recording contracts, as well as the Columbia record club (more than two million U.S. members) as a readymade marketing outlet.

RCA, which owns the second top U.S. network, the National Broadcasting Corporation, is of course just as strong. An added edge is that whereas CBS's player is farmed out (Motorola makes the EVR player), SelectaVision is wholly owned and operated by RCA. As a result, RCA claims that its first player will cost four hundred dollars, compared to just under a thousand dollars for the first generation EVR converter. RCA has also acquired a publishing firm (Random House), and will have a hundred cassette titles ready for its marketing drive. The reason for acquisition of publishing houses is apparently a double one: copyrights and, in foreign countries, distribution. In France, for instance, the big Librairie Hachette will be handling EVR.

But the holder of the biggest dossier of copyright, the film industry, is holding off and hoping that the market will decide which system will be the winner. No company wants to commit its vaults to a losing cassette; and another imponderable which makes decisions difficult is whether the public will pay the price—initially, at least, a high one—for cassette watching. Apart from the outlay for the player, the viewer will have to pay at least 25 dollars for a two-hour movie on a cassette. Indeed, the industry cannot make up its mind whether cassettes should be rented or sold like books, and part of the reason for this indecision is piracy.

Bootlegging is a major problem in the recording industry. An estimated one-third to one-half of all cartridges and cassettes sold in the U.S. are unauthorised, and the pirated revenue is thought to amount to more than a hundred million dollars a year. In the video field, piracy could ironically enough be the trump card for SelectaVision, since holography is very, very complicated. Miniaturised film is easy to copy—so easy that CBS hurriedly invented what it calls an anti-tinkering device and sent EVR president Robert Brockway west to reassure Hollywood. 'It is sure that if Darryl Zanuck committed his library to video tape and he walked by a record store window and there were two hundred copies of *Viva Zapata*, he'd have to be sure that 199 of them weren't made in someone's basement,' is how Brockway explained it to a Directors Guild of America meeting. Of the Hollywood majors, in fact, only 20th Century-Fox is 'pledged' to commit its library to any one system, and 1,500 Fox films five years old or

older are to be converted to EVR cartridges.

But if the majors are hesitant, show business lawyers are furiously at work, with cassette rights suddenly figuring in all sorts of contracts. By demanding an extension of copyrights, the Writers Guild of America became the first trade union to get into the act. Optronics Library, Inc., is a New York firm buying up cassette rights and already boasting a catalogue of 4,000 titles, from *Battle of Algiers* to sex education films. New contracts now often include 'extraterrestrial rights', in case cassettes may be beamed by satellite for cable television.

The first big victim of the impending revolution will be television as we know it, says Peter Guber, Columbia Pictures vice-president and author of the first serious comparative study of video-cassette*. In the United States, prime-time series seen by 25 million viewers are often cancelled as losers; but an opera attracting 500,000 cassette patrons at two dollars per rental or \$25 if purchased earns a profit; and *that* is what the revolution may be about.

Futurologists agree. Tomorrow will be a world of overchoice, of a surfeit of subcults. 'It is not simply a matter of more varied automobiles, detergents and cigarettes,' writes Alvin Toffler in his sociological bestseller *Future Shock*. 'The social thrust towards diversity and increased individual choice affects our mental as well as our material surroundings.' Talking about the 'segmented market', Peter Guber suggests that the cassette will erode TV down to news and sports. And Toffler thinks that TV is the last medium still 'homogenising taste'.

Futurologists are certain that the design-it-yourself trend will soon reach books, magazines, newspapers, and perhaps films. The Tokyo daily *Asahi Shimbun* is demonstrating a low-cost Telenews system for printing newspapers in the home, a first step towards the newspaper for the future, argues Toffler—'a peculiar newspaper offering no two viewer-readers the same content.' As diversifier, the video cassette is hence inevitable. It will quicken the already bewildering pace of life, suggests *Time*, by carrying the arts, education and cultural tastes yet further from any established norm. Marshall McLuhan is characteristically even more sweepingly prophetic. The video cassette 'will affect every aspect of our lives; will give us new needs, goals and desires, and will upset all political, educational and commercial establishments.' A lot of message for a new medium.

*'The New Ballgame, the Cartridge Revolution', by Peter Guber in *Cinema*, Vol. 6, No. 1.

Software: the EVR cartridge



The Aesthetics of the Zoom Lens

Paul Joannides



Still life in 'Deserto Rosso'

The transformations of the visual world caused by zoom and telephoto lenses are very similar; the latter could be called a 'frozen' zoom, and a stopped-out zoom is often used instead of a separate telephoto lens. They are, in essence, the mobile and static halves of the same process, and the aesthetic problems which arise from their use merge naturally into each other.

A Selective Background

In Rouben Mamoulian's *Love Me Tonight* (1932) there are several zoom shots, including two in the opening 'Paris Waking' sequence for rhythmic effect, and one at the end of the hunting sequence which is used dramatically. In Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* (1934) there are several telephoto shots of Hitler and other speakers on the rostrum of the Nazi Party rally at Nuremberg; here use is made of the compositional possibilities of juxtaposing objects at different depths in space.

These early examples are fairly isolated; careful research would discover others. Leon Shamroy, for example, is quoted in *Hollywood Cameramen* as saying that he used a zoom in La Cava's *Private Worlds* (1935); but zoom and telephoto shots are rare in films of the 1930s and 40s, though Humphrey Jennings realised some of the potentialities of telephoto shooting in his documentaries, particularly *Listen to Britain*. In the 50s, however, their use became more frequent

and there was more awareness of the possibilities.

Kurosawa, a compositional genius, used a telephoto lens in *Seven Samurai* (1954) to bring the action right up to the audience in the famous shot of the falling horse which seems to topple into the auditorium, and Kubrick used a zoom combined with a lateral track, to follow Kirk Douglas in the short but complicated battle sequence of *Paths of Glory* (1958). Rolf Thiele made striking expressionistic use of the possibilities of telephoto distortion in his very advanced and astonishingly underrated *Das Mädchen Rosemarie*, also made in 1958, which, incidentally, also had a soundtrack of electronic music. But it was only in the 1960s that zoom and telephoto lenses really came into their own. In *The Train* (1964) John Frankenheimer compiled an anthology of dramatic zoom shots, making full use of very long zooms to reveal significant detail. Above all, Michelangelo Antonioni used telephoto compositions to unite his characters and the industrial landscape in *Deserto Rosso* (1964),

a development as significant as his psychological use of colour.

Ways of Use

Despite their basic affinity, zoom and telephoto lenses tend to be used differently. In a zoom the active function, the movement, is primary; in a telephoto shot it is the static composition. Of course, distinctions are never absolute and both types of lens can be used in infinite series of gradations; nevertheless, general differences hold. A zoom generally singles out a detail in a setting or reveals a setting by moving out from a detail. It has an emphatic quality, demonstrating points in a context rather than combining those points in a new whole; it is less often used to create a new composition, that being more easily achieved by a cut to a different set-up. The zoom is most familiar from television as a reportorial device: to move into a close-up of someone being interviewed, for example, or to point out a particular detail in a football match without making a cut. Similarly, a telephoto shot provides a useful means of obtaining close-ups where this would not otherwise be possible, but avoiding the dramatic effect of a zoom in; for example at political meetings or conferences, where a close-up shot of a speaker or delegate is required.

Watching a football match or an election meeting on newsreel, we are present within an already defined situation. The zoom or telephoto shot is simply a device which allows us to get close. It has no existence in its own right. It is a function, not a form. In fiction films the situation is different. The action is not independent of the camera's presence, it is designed for it, and the camera is its *raison d'être*. Therefore each detail of camera positioning and movement assumes great importance. In this context zoom and telephoto shots begin to acquire complex implications.

Obviously, zoom and telephoto lenses can be used within fiction films in a reportorial manner. The battle sequence in *Paths of Glory* is a case in point, enabling us to get into a situation which would otherwise have been impossible to reach. In a similar way Don Siegel used telephoto lenses in *Riot in Cell Block 11*, partly to convey a documentary flavour, partly because filming on location in a prison he often could not get the camera in the appropriate position, and partly to convey the geometric nature of the setting. Apart from examples like these, the most frequent use of the zoom lens is as a substitute for forward and backward camera movement. It saves the cameraman the trouble of setting up a tracking shot, and, if it is an exterior, of building tracks. It can save work in other ways. In a hand-to-hand combat sequence, a zoom in on the hero or villain to bring back the audience's attention to the individual is often easier than cutting to a close-up, which involves re-creating the action in the immediate vicinity. The telephoto lens can similarly be used as a substitute for lateral tracking shots. The camera pans in long-distance close-up, approximating to the effect of a track over a certain distance which need not depend on the circumference of the circle drawn round the camera by the focus of the lens but can be extended by a gentle zoom until the panning angle makes itself felt. An extreme example of the use of zoom and telephoto shots as substitutes for other movements is Visconti's *The Damned*.

Another familiar use of the zoom is for dramatic purposes. A swift zoom in or out creates excitement. It can be used to reveal, say, potential danger, either in the distance or near the camera within a single shot. A zoom combined with a shock cut is a common trick to make an audience jump in a horror film. A less common use, but one which is becoming more frequent, might loosely be described as expressive. In the poolside copulation sequence in Lewis Gilbert's *The Adventurers*, for example, the camera zooms in and out as the couple approach their climax.

A use for which the zoom is particularly fitted is 'searching', akin to its reportorial function. The 10:1 zoom in *The Train* which finds Burt Lancaster on the hillside, for example, emphasises his efforts and his weakness in contrast to the train, the conflict between man and machine, in a way which a reverse angle cut with Lancaster in the foreground and the train down in the valley would not have achieved.

Telephoto shots tend to be used most of all when the director wants us to see something clearly but also wants to convey a sense of our distance from it. The scene in *Topaz* where Roscoe Lee Browne suborns the

Cuban secretary is a case in point. The telephoto lens only contributes to drama when drama is dependent on space; otherwise it is generally used for the attractive effects it can often have.

Attributes

Before arguing about the aesthetic viability of these ways of use, and about the aesthetic possibilities of zoom and telephoto lenses, it is necessary to examine their attributes. The zoom is distinctive in that it is the only form of 'camera' movement, unlike tracks, tilts, pans, cranes, etc., which is internal to the camera rather than external. All other movements approximate, apart from framing, to what a man would see were he placed in the same position as the camera. The zoom operates in a different dimension from the rest of the camera's repertoire. It can never, or almost never, be mistaken for a track: even a short zoom is physically different. Unlike a tracking shot a zoom represents a denial of perspective. The effect is not one of moving *through* space, but of space warping towards or away from the camera. It annihilates the third dimension which all other camera movements respect, and it flattens the photographed object.

The fact of its distinctiveness, combined with its ease of use, makes it a very dangerous tool. It jars the audience and unless it is very necessary, as in a long distance shot, it usually looks out of place in a conventionally filmed context. Even used as a shock device, as in the time-honoured situation where someone opens a door or a cupboard and the camera zooms in to a putrefying corpse, it is essentially false because the eye cannot zoom, whereas a cut to a different angle or a fast track, no matter how unjustified in terms of the physical arrangement of the scene, can approximate more truthfully to the frightened person's perception. Of course, if the action is powerful enough this objection carries little emotional weight, though it is

still valid logically. The telephoto lens has a similar effect. Perspective both before and behind the subject of attention is compressed. The physical world, instead of being made up of objects, is reduced to shapes.

Obviously it can be argued that many aspects of cinematic vocabulary are not 'natural', but they are generally consistent within certain conventions. Even the exterior sets of Hollywood, though blatantly artificial, are metaphors for reality.

Zoom and telephoto lenses are not unique in operating outside the basic laws of perspective space. Wide-angle lenses also do this. They open out the third dimension like a concertina, thus destroying all coherent vertical and horizontal relationships. Unlike zoom and telephoto lenses, which compress depth and render it as a two-dimensional pattern, the pictorial possibilities of wide-angle lenses are limited mainly to 'expressive distortion' as in *Repulsion* or *Seconds*.

A composition has to be of Sternbergian elaboration, a tracking shot of Clarence Brown length, really to call attention to itself, and even then it is as a virtuoso effect. Zoom and telephoto shots call attention to themselves by their very nature. They are arbitrary insertions in the conventions of 'normal' cinema, and more importantly, 'normal' vision. The fact that they are so often used lazily as substitution devices, and that they can have a very genuine use and expressive purpose within the conventions of 'normal' cinema, has tended to blind audiences to their real significance: that they can eliminate the third dimension. When this is realised it can be seen that zoom and telephoto lenses are of extreme importance. Ultimately they are not a device, they are a style.

Consequences

There are certain inevitable consequences of the use of zoom and telephoto lenses. These are both visual and dramatic; the former is

Patterns on the road in 'Easy Rider'



probably paramount, but directly affects the latter, which can also be influenced by some of the psychological concomitants—disjunction and alienation—of the lenses.

Both zooms and telephoto shots contain a strong tendency to abstraction. Both deny the reality of space. A telephoto close-up of Monica Vitti in *Deserto Rosso*, for example, shows a figure against an abstract arrangement of forms. Buildings become shapes, objects patterns. The differences between telephoto and normal composition can be described in Wölfflinian terms. Although the differences are not identical to any overall distinction, such as that between High Renaissance and Baroque, still the categories are useful tools of visual analysis.

In this scheme a telephoto composition would be painterly rather than linear, stressing blocks of colour rather than contours, planar rather than recession, through the elimination of perspective; unity rather than multiplicity, suppressing and coalescing details rather than allowing them to exist together as in the 'democratic' world of deep focus; and unclearness rather than clearness, blurring everything outside the centre of attention. Of these categories the most significant is that a telephoto composition is planar rather than recession. The other effects can be obtained by pre-stylising—by lighting, set design, etc. A telephoto composition 'planarises' the natural world.* This



Figure in a landscape in 'Adalen '31'

development is extremely important. The screen again becomes a flat surface with flat patterns projected on to it, not a window through which we see the world.

Of course directors in the past, like painters, have often stressed planarity in their compositions. It is easy enough to see modifications being made within an existing scheme which look like forerunners of a new scheme; one can always find precedents in details. What is really important, however, is when what was previously seen simply as a problem to be solved becomes the basis of a new scheme, a new way of seeing. In cinematic terms the situation today is equivalent to the situation of Western European painting at the end of the 19th century. The Renaissance rediscovery of one-point perspective, though subject to manipulation in the interests of balancing surface design and depth, had remained a reasonably consistent foundation of European painting. It was not that painters necessarily applied mathematical perspective in their pictures, rather

that perspective was the rationale of illusionism and that the primary fact about painting was that it was, as Alberti put it, 'a window on the world'. It was only at the end of the 19th century, most significantly with Cézanne, that the canvas again came to be seen as, above all, a flat surface, a development in vision which is the basis of Cubism and a great deal of 20th-century art. Thus painting was seen not as something else, a tree or a man or an animal, but as itself, paint on canvas with no obligation to be other than that. Film, though there is no reason for it to go to the same extreme, is in a similar position. It is now more open to directors than ever before to use the screen as a modern painter might use a canvas, as a flat surface, not as a stage.

The use of a plane surface automatically encourages an emphasis on patterning and an abstraction from reality. Since the cinema, apart from long takes, is based ultimately on montage, this would automatically tend to create a different relationship between shot and shot, based on patterning rather than subject-matter, pictoriality rather than theatricality. Structure within scenes will obviously undergo drastic alteration. As Richard Rush said recently, 'Blocking with long lenses forces actors to stop on millimetre sharp cue-marks, but it also allows long passages without protection coverage. Once you're into this, the traditional technique of master-shot, two-shots, over-shoulder close-ups and back to the master feels flat...'

The camera will thus play a more passive role dramatically, but a more potent one visually. Rather than being placed to construct the scene, it will treat the scene as a formal entity. Thus observation and group-composition will be more important than the dialectic of 'significant' detail which usually makes up drama. Dialogue will tend to be replaced by conversation and will be arranged differently, in set-pieces rather than by cross-cutting. A recent example is Robert Altman's *M*A*S*H*, where the suicide 'last-supper' sequence is shot with a zoom moving forwards and backwards to create tableaux rather than by cutting from person to person to show individual reactions.

Whereas directors have usually treated purely formal considerations as aspects of a thematic/dramatic situation, form can now become the basis of a film. Even an artist of visual genius like Antonioni creates images which are literary in their complex resonances and intellectual subtlety. With the 'abstraction quotient' raised, it will be more possible for form to be the unifying force of a film, as rhythm, colour, pattern, texture, etc., can be the central objectives of a painting. Not that this need necessarily lead to an abandonment of dense 'literary' content if it is derived, or to the alienation of the mass audience. Rather that feelings will be evoked more by formal arrangement, as in painting, than by words and carefully structured dramatic situation, as in theatre.

The possibility of placing the aesthetic centre of a film in a formalised dimension will inevitably allow greater freedom in what a director may show. In a conventional narrative the possibilities of image which the director has at his disposal are limited. The authorial presence is betrayed if the director steps outside a certain conventional range. This can be very wide, Sternberg to Bresson, but the limitations are still present. Even the

beautiful patterns of Busby Berkeley are acceptable only within the permissive world of the dance.

Given the abstracting, formal rather than realistic, basis of zoom and telephoto shooting, a different frame of reference is set up: the medium is seen as cine-photography, not reality. Whereas within a realistic framework formal experiment is limited, within a non-realistic framework everything is possible, even realism. Thus in a film whose visual premises are different from those of the three-dimensional world as we see it, directorial freedom will be much greater. This offers marvellous opportunities for symbolic montage à la Eisenstein—sequences of images based on formal or intellectual progression—not on an esoteric or solipsistic basis as in so many underground films but as a logical consequence of the inherent possibilities of the medium. This can also lead to devices like transposed dyes and electronic sound being used much more freely. In, say, Jack Cardiff's *Girl on a Motorcycle* and Daniel Haller's *The Dunwich Horror*, dyes are used for expressive effect. In films operating on a formal basis the ranges of colour and sound available could be used without the necessity for this sort of explanation.

But formal need not mean sterile, and suppression of visual detail need not mean intellectual suppression. Paradoxically, films which operate on a zoom/telephoto/patterned-montage basis can handle much more relaxed and casual acting styles than can 'normal' drama. This is closely allied to the tendency to do away with 'meaningful' arrangements and to allow a freer flow of life through the frame, allowing a good deal of intellectually and visually fascinating material, extraneous in conventional terms, to be incorporated in the overall structure. Two recent films, James Goldstone's *Winning* and Stuart Hagmann's *The Strawberry Statement*, both generally underestimated and partially misunderstood, create this sense of naturalness within a predominantly formalist style.

Ultimately there is no need for alarm about the new possibilities of expression created by zoom and telephoto shooting. Film is unlikely to find itself in the position of much modern art which so many people find increasingly irrelevant. Film has a natural tendency towards realism; painting does not. Set a camera up in front of an object and what it photographs will be recognised; in painting representation is more difficult technically than abstraction. There is little danger of film ceasing to be a popular art form through any move towards absolute abstraction. That is rather the realm of the colour-box and the light show.

The main problem which zoom and telephoto lenses present is that older directors, or directors of little perception, will insist on using them as substitution devices. This is a role for which they are not fitted; and it can, in the case of Visconti's *The Damned* for example, completely ruin the astonishing sensual immediacy he was able to create with a conventionally moving camera, while at the same time not offering any compensatory advantages.

NOTE: The stills are intended to suggest some contemporary camera styles; they are not necessarily telephoto shots.

*As David Lloyd kindly informs me, a number of cameramen are beginning to use only soft lights with zoom and telephoto lenses, thus avoiding separation between foreground and background and further emphasising planarity.



'Directed by John Ford': Ford and Peter Bogdanovich (right) in Monument Valley.

COUNTY MAYO GU BRAGH...

Joseph McBride

Knowing John Ford's fabled disdain for interviewers, I decided to play the professional Irishman in approaching him. My letter had gone unanswered, so I called his office in Beverly Hills. Ford walked in while I was talking to his secretary. I told him that Michael Wilmington and I were writing a book about him. 'My God! What for?' he growled. 'You certainly picked a dull subject.' He picked up my letter and said he hadn't looked at his mail for a month. I had added 'County Mayo' after my name and Ford read the words aloud, accenting the last syllable as the natives do. Warming up, he told me his people had come from a neighbouring county, Galway, and that his wife is a McBryde. So I was practically a relative.

Then I really laid it on, mentioning that one of my ancestors had come to America after deserting from the British Army. When Ford told me about *his* ancestor who had deserted from the British Army and come to America, I knew I had made it—even though my little stunt was, as Dylan Thomas used to say, 'very lepri-corny'. (What would a Welshman know about it, anyway?) It developed that Ford's ancestor had beat mine over by thirty years, arriving during the Revolutionary War, and had received a personal letter from George Washington, now in the director's possession. I was about

to mention that I had attended the same high school as Spencer Tracy and Pat O'Brien when Ford said again, rather archly now, that he had 'led a dull life'. I muttered something about how many movies he had made. But then he said I could have the interview since I had 'the proper ethnic background' and added, 'Otherwise I'd tell you to go to hell.'

Apparently he meant it, for when I arrived at his office he said, 'This is positively the last interview I'm going to give.' Talking to Ford was like squatting beside the chuck wagon with one of the Earp

brothers for a chaw and a swig of coffee from a tin cup. There was a hum of activity inside his office. People were being ushered in and out, phones were ringing, letters were being thrust into his hands—a curious contrast with the tranquillity of Renoir's home, which I would be visiting later in the day. The bustle had a melancholy cast; this is a director who hasn't been able to make a feature for almost five years. Dour and unruly, Ford was wearing tennis shoes, baggy off-white trousers, and a blue shirt with his belly poking through the buttons. His eyepatch hung askew over his left eye, and his remaining white hair was sticking out in every direction. The remaining eye fixed you with a basilisk stare—when he looked at you, which was mainly when he was irritated. He pulled open a drawer and proffered a cigar. He spat bits of his cigar into a wastebasket next to his desk, and when he took a pill, he stuck out his tongue and gargled in mock disgust.

There was a paradox in the way the two elder statesmen received their visitor. Renoir took a seat halfway across the room and spoke with great intimacy. Ford had me sit right next to him, and threw up a smoke-screen of evasions and feigned ignorance. It would be hard to find two men with such entirely different manners. Renoir is courtly, a bit aloof, the consummate inhabitant of a pantheon. Receiving me with his wife Dido, he asked that I not use my tape recorder. For one thing, he preferred a conversation to a discussion; for another, he was engaged in some writing, and a published interview would prematurely reveal its contents. I felt like a novice monk sitting at the feet of the Dalai Lama.

'You like anarchy, don't you?' I asked him. 'Of course,' he replied. I asked about his project for Jeanne Moreau, *Julienne et ses Amours*, and he said, with a wistful smile, 'She died before she could be born.' Renoir seemed touched by my enthusiasm for *Boudu Sauvé des Eaux*, especially when I recalled the way Boudu messes up an entire kitchen while trying to polish his shoes. 'That must have been the way Adam messed up the Garden of Eden, eh?' he said. We talked of directing, acting, writing, painting, youth, age, politics—everything.

Ford, on the other hand, totally intimidated me. I knew, of course, what a hard case he was going to be. I knew that behind his cowboy pose lurked a shrewd, sophisticated man, ready to pounce on any foolishness. I had gotten a fresh haircut (in case the Duke walked in while we were talking), but even that did me no good. Ford's partial deafness gave the interview a touch of absurdist comedy. He made me shout questions several times ('I'm deaf as hell in this one ear'), even spelling out words, to get them across. One suspects Ford rather enjoys his deafness, because it lets him pretend he hasn't heard an irksome question; perversely, he had me sit on his deaf side. I had prepared a long list of questions—calculated to clear up mysteries left by previous interviewers—but when he would answer with a testy 'I don't know' I began to fall back on questions that had been asked before.

I respected his impatience. Ford likes to describe directing as 'just a job of work'. Like his heroes, he feels that to insist on the importance of his job would be to betray its integrity. He has always considered himself a rebel, and even today, despite his professional honours and his standing as a United States admiral, he has (in Welles' words) 'chips on his shoulders like epaulettes'. Furthermore, he has trained himself to communicate through pictures, and explaining a picture, as somebody once said, is as dull as explaining a joke. But it would be a mistake to take Ford at face value and see his films as the work of a primitive with 'a touch of the poet'. He is an extremely complex man who expresses himself with the utmost simplicity and directness.

The deft, devastating way Ford put me down showed who was getting the better of whom. He *does* like to tell stories, though, and it was delightful to listen to his rich, melodious voice as he told them. His speech still retains a strong New England twang—'John Wayne' comes out 'Jawn Wayne'. But Ford would not have you think that he lives in the past; he even pretended not to remember what some of his films were about (his associates say he remembers every shot). Sadly, the most animated response came when we talked of the future—of his cherished Revolutionary War project, *April Morning*, which, to the shame of the cinema, he cannot finance.

JOSEPH MCBRIDE: *I understand that you spent some time in Vietnam.*

FORD: I was over there last year doing a picture for the Department of Defense about the Vietnamisation of Vietnam, what the Vietnamese themselves are doing to convert the country and take over. I was just sort of overseeing, supervising a film that they were making. I was over there quite a while.

Very interesting.

Has the film been released yet?

No. We're still cutting it.

Did you actually direct it yourself?

Just supervised it. Nothing to direct. What I did is generally went out there and said, 'That'd be a good thing to shoot, let's shoot that.' I say, 'This would be a good thing to shoot,' then I go up into the boon-docks . . . I had one very happy experience. I went up there and decorated my grandson, Daniel, my son's boy. He got the Silver Star and several Purple Hearts. He can do without the Purple Hearts, we've got enough of those in the family, but the Silver Star is a pretty high decoration for a kid up there, you know, and they don't come up with the ratings.

Is that the only filming you've done since SEVEN WOMEN?

No, I'm doing a documentary, I just finished it, on a very dear friend of mine, Lt.Gen. Chesty Puller, who was the most decorated Marine in history. I just did a three-reeler on his life, for television.

What company?

A private group. We had no sponsor. It isn't placed yet.

What's the title of it?

I don't know. That's a stupid answer, but I don't know what the hell the title is, I'm trying to remember. It's called *Chesty*, or *A Tribute* . . . I don't know what the hell it is.

What does it consist of?

Interviews with his friends, newsreel stuff, taking him all the way from World War I through Nicaragua and Haiti and through World War II and Korea. I was with him in Korea quite a while. I was his tentmate and we were very close friends, so they asked me to do this thing, and I did it.

Who were some of the people you interviewed?

Well, the only one you'd know . . . a lot of names I forget, Marine officers . . . I'm not good at names. John Wayne narrated the thing. He was a great friend of Chesty's.

Were you happy with the way it came out? It's pretty short, isn't it?

Well, as a matter of fact, it's too long, if anything. We had to pad it too much. The first three-quarters are great, then we have to pad it a little bit. The finish is really good. I'm very pleased with it, yes.

Renoir in his garden. Photograph by Joseph McBride.



What about APRIL MORNING, the Revolutionary War story? How's that coming?

Well, it's still coming. No company wants to do it. It's a great script. It's the best script I've ever read.

It's about a young boy, isn't it?

A boy and a man, a boy and his father. His mother. It's not really a battle story, it's a character sketch. The only historical character we use is Paul Revere.

Not George Washington?

No, he was unknown then.

Didn't you mention that Frank Capra always wanted to do a film about George Washington, and wasn't able to?

Yeah, he's got a great story about Valley Forge, but nobody would go for it.

Why?

These are an ignorant lot of bastards.

Did they think the public wouldn't buy it?

No, they say, who the hell's interested in George Washington? I heard one producer say that to him. I says, 'I am, for one, and I know millions of other people are.' He says, 'That's dead fish, nobody's interested in the American Revolution.' I said, 'You ever read the history of the American Revolution?' He says, 'Hell no, I had better things to do.' I says, 'They didn't teach you in the sixth grade, when you graduated?' He says, 'What do you mean? I went through to the eighth grade.'

What do you think the chances are of persuading them to let you make it?

Very slim.

Could I ask you about SEVEN WOMEN?

Sure, go ahead. It's one of my favourite pictures.

Were you surprised when it didn't do well with the American audience?

Unh-unh. It was over their heads.

You made it knowing that the Americans wouldn't like it, then.

No, I didn't give a damn whether they liked it or not. I thought it was a swell story and a good script, so I did it.

Some people thought THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE was a summing-up of your attitudes about the West.

I don't know.

CHEYENNE AUTUMN sort of questioned the Cavalry, didn't it?

Well, the Cavalry weren't all-American boys, you know. They made a lot of mistakes. Custer, that was a pretty silly goddam expedition.

I understand that John Wayne felt uneasy about being in FORT APACHE because he thinks Custer was a disgrace to the Cavalry.

Oh, that's a lot of crap. I don't think he's ever heard of Custer.

When you first started directing John Wayne, was he a natural actor?

Umm-hmm. He still is.

How much do you have to talk to somebody like him after you've directed him ten or twenty times? Do you have to discuss the role much with him?

They read the script, they know what you want, they get out in front of the camera and say 'What do we do?' and I tell 'em, and they do it, usually in the first take.

What did you think of Wayne finally getting the Oscar after so many years?

Isn't that rather a useless question?

Did you see TRUE GRIT?

Unh-Unh. I was delighted when he won

LAUGHTER



Keaton in 'Spite Marriage'

As film history continues to be opened up, it becomes easier to see why the cinema needed sound at a particular point in its development. Two recent discoveries, Keaton's last silent film *Spite Marriage* (1929), viewed in a little Paris neighbourhood theatre with (believe it or not) no musical accompaniment, and Harry d'Abbadie d'Arrast's early sound film *Laughter* (1930), the main revelation of London's Cinema City exhibition, strikingly illustrate an historical progression.

The Keaton is a considerable find, but at the same time a little sad. It came at the end of a fabulously inventive period, and one feels here that the machine was beginning slightly to run down, that whether he liked it or not he was trapped in repeating himself. The story is sketchy but serviceable: to spite her lover, famous actress (Dorothy Sebastian) agrees to marry Buster, who has idolised her every evening in the theatre, but her continued yearning for the other man drives her to drink. Keaton, perplexed, gets involved with some bootleggers, and it all ends in mad confusion on a boat straight out of *The Navigator*.

For once, this is not a Keaton-dominated show: in the pert, obviously double-jointed Miss Sebastian, Keaton found his most talented foil, and she plays marvellously with him in the film's two funniest sequences. Early on, she gets quite stoned in a nightclub and has to be helped home; here she turns into a human jelly, resisting all of Keaton's efforts to get her first into a chair and then into bed. In a scene of mounting frustration and inextricable entanglement, Buster can't even find a way to loosen her dress. Similarly, on the boat, she fails dismally to help him adjust the sails and has to be fished from a morass of flapping sheets. When the villain attacks him, Buster runs the length of the boat several times (caught in some virtuoso panning shots, notably when he falls off the bow and floats right down to the stern) and

eventually quells his opponent in a tough fight slightly reminiscent of Harold Lloyd's heroic battle in *Kid Brother*.

The weak spots are mainly in the expository theatre scenes, which might have worked better if sound could have replaced the silent titles. Simply, *Spite Marriage* lacks the character and density of the best Keaton; physically he looks a little strained, the one fast running scene (vide *The Camera-man*, made a year earlier) is cut surprisingly short, and the settings are rather lacklustre. This, of course, is judging it by the highest standards: *Spite Marriage* has a lot to offer and deserves a wide showing.

Keaton's genius was in the manipulation of situations and action, the silent cinema attributes so often sacrificed to those awkward dialogue exchanges of early sound movies. The first thing that strikes one about *Laughter* is its awareness of the importance of good, speakable dialogue as an integral part of the scheme. Donald Ogden Stewart's script collaboration (his first major work for the cinema) leads us easily into that world of class pretensions and casual flirtations which also attracted him in his theatrical adaptations for Cukor. Unhappily married woman (Nancy Carroll), tied to a rich financier (Frank Morgan), meets old flame Fredric March, a struggling composer, and passion revives. Another admirer (Glenn Anders) dallies with her stepdaughter and eventually shoots himself when the wife intervenes. Urged on by the composer, she gives up the high life and dashes to Paris with him. In the last shot, however, she is eyeing enviously the bracelet worn by the lady at the next table.

Nowhere is there any forced moral judgment: the heroine is basically a gold-digger, the hero feels no scruples in breaking up the marriage, but behind all the larking lurk the pressures of class and the lure of rich respectability. The overall tone has the

veneer of Lubitsch without his nudging visual juxtapositions; the direction of the players is unobtrusively precise and pointed. A totally adult entertainment, in fact, with the camera constantly catching the characters in little gestures of surprise and pleasure, as in the scene when March barges into the house, cadges some food from the hostile butler, sits down at the piano, and finally persuades the butler to reveal hidden musical talent by joining him in a duet. Similarly, the sequence where March and Carroll get lost on a country car ride while 'looking for the ocean', and joke with some equally clueless passers-by, pre-echoes much of Cukor, Hawks and McCarey. Technically, the narrative has a crisp, beautifully timed rhythm with some deliberately abrupt sound joins whose equivalent can only be found in Mamoulian's *Applause*—itself a more consciously experimental sound essay.

D'Arrast is particularly forward-looking in what could now be called 'spatial relationships'. He invariably composes in depth, starting from the rear of a room and moving forward to catch two or three figures in mid-close shot, as in the tense conversation just before the hapless lover's suicide when he and the two girls are framed before a window in a half-circle and the scene is played entirely with backs to camera.

Who was Harry d'Abbadie d'Arrast? He came to America from France in the early 1920s and was hired by Chaplin as adviser and assistant on *A Woman of Paris* and later *The Gold Rush*. He made eight films between 1927 and 1934 and then virtually disappeared from the business, leading a sadly obscure existence in Europe until his death in 1968. According to Herman Weinberg, all his work, silent or sound, had the distinction to be expected from a disciple of Lubitsch, Mal St. Clair and Monta Bell. Now one would dearly love to see the three silent social comedies with Menjou, *Service for Ladies*, *Gentleman of Paris* and *Serenade*, the sound version of *Topaze* made with Barrymore and the visually spectacular *Three-Cornered Hat*.

Donald Ogden Stewart, his old friend and collaborator, gave me this personal comment: 'Harry directed *Laughter* as he directed his life—with wit, understanding, control, compassion, and great whole-hearted laughter.' Happily, after this revival, he is no longer just an odd-sounding name at the tail end of reference books.

'Laughter': Frank Morgan, Nancy Carroll



Film REVIEWS

L'Enfant Sauvage

When Jean-Pierre Léaud turned his accusatory glance on the world in that last frozen frame of *Quatre Cents Coups*, he was asking the question Truffaut keeps returning to in his films. When innocence is sullied by a world with a passion for normality and escape into fantasy offers only an illusory freedom, what then? Antoine Doinel turned his back on the sea and has since opted, via the sentimental education of *Baisers Volés*, for a kind of conformity. His is the safe middle course, reconciliation with a world made tolerable by Truffaut's celebration of the infinite variety of human experience. The other options seem like opposite poles of extremism. Montag, the fireman of *Fahrenheit 451*, hesitantly rejects the comfortable conformity of universal illiteracy and seeks refuge in the rearguard optimism of the book people; at the other extreme, Catherine in *Jules et Jim*, herself the embodiment of fantasy, destroys her lovers' fantasy with the ultimate *acte gratuit*.

These are all, in their different ways, gestures of innocence, and Truffaut has always been fascinated by innocence. And by children, from the real children of *Les Mistons* and *Les Quatre Cents Coups* to the hopeful nursery of the future at the end of *Fahrenheit 451*. In *L'Enfant Sauvage* (United Artists) we have the archetypal innocent, and the systematic corruption of innocence: animal nature—in the shape of a wolf boy—tamed and 'civilised' by rational society, in the person of a well-meaning doctor and according to the notions of the time. It is the back-to-nature fantasy in reverse; a detailed, almost clinical examination of the process by which impulse is subdued by education. Here there is no escape into fantasy, since rationalised fantasy is the real world of a being unaware of the options afforded by rationality. Free will means nothing to the wolf boy, as it does to Catherine and Montag and Antoine Doinel, because he is himself already 'free'. Like Montag, he learns the significance of the written word; but can he, like Antoine Doinel, survive his loss of innocence?

As it happens, Truffaut leaves the question unanswered (at least in so far as he offers no explicit answer himself), preferring simply to present the facts. The case is authentic, based on the reports of Dr. Jean Itard of the Paris Institute for the Deaf and Dumb. The time is the end of the eighteenth century, when the Age of Reason was about to be overtaken by the parallel forces of science and ideology. Truffaut establishes from the start that Itard's interest in the boy is more out of scientific curiosity than from recognisable humanitarian motives, thus incidentally but adroitly anticipating any charge of sentimentality. The professor of medicine diagnoses a classic case of imbecility; better, reasons Itard, put the diagnosis to the test than simply have the boy exhibited as a freak for the amusement of Paris society. So he takes him into his own home, where with the help of an understanding housekeeper he sets about the task of civilising the savage.

Truffaut's observation of this process is as meticulous and objective as Itard's methods. Each stage in the boy's development is charted in detail and without comment, except for

Itard's own comments in his diary, which here takes the place of the actual written reports from which the comments are taken. The boy's muted senses are awakened; he is taught to tolerate the inconvenience of clothes for the convenience of the warmth they provide; he learns the letters of the alphabet and the association of letters and words with the objects they represent: he even begins to respond to a name, Victor. It's an engrossing experiment to watch, and as we watch the temptation is to identify with Itard, his failures and successes, his cool determination to take the experiment as far as it will go. Not that Truffaut's style invites any such identification. As befits the observation of a scientific experiment, the film is sober, unemotional, pared down to essentials.

Style, in fact, is appropriately matched to content, here perhaps more rigorously than in any of Truffaut's previous films. The opening is a free-wheeling celebration of the boy's freedom, and at the same time a visual presage of the impending deprivation of that freedom. The camera pans back and forth across the forest, like a nervous intruder as it tracks the boy burrowing in the undergrowth and suddenly shinning up a tree to survey the threat to his territory; then into close-up as the dogs cut off his retreat and the hunters smoke him out from his earth; finally observing with clinical detachment as he is measured and prodded by the doctors to whom he is as yet simply an interesting specimen.

As civilisation finally assimilates the savage, order is restored; the feeling now is of a world where every object has its proper place and function and every man his predetermined destiny, and the camera records this sense of order as a kind of animated still life. The black-and-white photography (Nestor Almendros), at first disconcerting, now seems exactly right for this opposition of culture and nature. As does Truffaut's use of the iris, perhaps a homage to

Jean-Pierre Cargol



the silent cinema (there are long passages of silence in the film), perhaps a symbol for the boy's innocence or even for the innocence of an early practitioner of the art of scientific observation. At any rate as a device Truffaut uses it imaginatively and with perfect timing to illustrate freedom and constriction—irising out at the beginning from the boy perched in his tree, irising in to his face as he grapples with a bowl of soup under the watchful eyes of Itard and the housekeeper.

Though we watch the boy's taming from Itard's point of view, the focus gradually turns on Itard himself. *L'Enfant Sauvage* is in fact as much a study of mentor as of pupil, for beneath that austere, seemingly impassive exterior there is a thirst for knowledge which not even the discouragement of failure can quench. Appropriate, then, that Itard should be played by Truffaut himself (the boy is Jean-Pierre Cargol, in real life a gypsy); and one gradually realises that the film is very much a reflection of its maker, as 'autobiographical' a work as *Les Quatre Cents Coups*. In choosing to play Itard himself, Truffaut pays oblique homage to his own mentor, Bazin. And the film reveals ample evidence of how well this twentieth-century wild boy responded to his lessons in cinema: in particular in its echoes of Renoir *père et fils* (the impressionist play of light and shade in the interiors; the exhilaration of the boy's excursions into the country and the games he plays in the sunlit gardens).

Truffaut-Itard also introduces a nice ambiguity about how we should interpret the character. As an eighteenth-century rationalist Itard is naturally concerned to test his pupil's moral sense; but with Truffaut playing him it's impossible to resist the irony of his pleasure at awakening a sense of justice in the boy. Or indeed to wonder how far one could take a post-Freudian analysis of the housekeeper's role as surrogate mother. It would no doubt be possible to erect a structuralist framework around the film; the dualities (animal-human, reason-impulse, signs and meanings, words and objects) are there for the taking. Simpler, though, to observe what Truffaut means us to observe, in particular the obvious parallel with his first film. As Antoine Doinel was caged—literally as well as figuratively—by the environment which failed to respond to his need for affection, so here the wild boy is forcibly incarcerated in the name of a kind of freedom. Truffaut makes the point by juxtaposing the disorder of nature with the ordered geometry of civilisation: the emphasis on windows and walls as a recurring image, freedom or imprisonment depending on which way you're looking at them.

The end of the film, with the boy returning from a brief sortie into a freedom he can no longer enjoy, seems at first sight to offer a pessimistic gloss on the antithesis Truffaut has proposed ('You are no longer a savage, even if you are not yet a man,' Itard tells him). In fact, Truffaut is unequivocal about whether the boy would have been happier left in the forest. The lessons will continue, Itard says, as the boy shuffles off to bed. It's a romantic notion perhaps; but the alternative, Truffaut implies, would be like the end of *Les Quatre Cents Coups* without a *Baisers Volés* to follow. The film, after all, is dedicated to Jean-Pierre Léaud.

DAVID WILSON

Bronco Bullfrog and Loving

'Of course, if you do it all the establishment way, you've had it. But it shouldn't be necessary to go cap in hand to those idiots.' Brooks Wilson, the Bohemian artist of *Loving*, decrying the attempts of big business to seduce his talents with an advertising contract? Or Barney Platts-Mills, director of *Bronco Bullfrog*, telling the press what he thinks of distributors? It is, just for the record,

Platts-Mills, but the sentiments expressed are of course archetypal, the old battle-cry of the misunderstood artist, resolutely refusing to sell his soul to the compromises of bourgeois taste.

Both *Loving*, as a film, and *Bronco Bullfrog*, as a case-history, illustrate the crippling impact of capitalist democracy on art: gone the private patron, in his place the anonymous board, company or industry to whom the only criterion of artistic success is to get their money back. There must be a moral in the fact that, when I last saw *Bronco Bullfrog* (before it vacated the Cameo-Poly) it was showing with a London documentary of such crushing banality that one member of the audience stalked off bravely to the manager's office, only to return with the dread pronouncement, 'They can't do anything about it. It's the distributors.' Morals of course are cold comfort to the makers of *Bronco Bullfrog*, which runs the risk of sinking without trace now that it has left the haven of a West End art house.

The final shot of the film freezes Del and Irene at a point when their message is equally chilling: capitulate or run. Moments earlier, a near-lyrical telephoto shot of three figures, running languidly, grins breaking on their faces, had crystallised the sheer rapture of freedom that has eluded Del throughout. That it is achieved now under the shadow of police pursuit seems unimportant; the whole system is against him, but even that is a measure of independence. *Bronco Bullfrog* (British Lion), for all its surface aimlessness, is structured around the simple conflict between personal aspirations and the restraints of society. The aspirations are modest enough (a few kicks from till-breaking and petty theft, a brief elopement, the hope of a job in the country), but in the context of a stifling environment they assume heroic proportions.

The surface of this environment is chillingly re-created in Adam Barker-Mill's sharply etched photography (despite some rather bleached exteriors) and in the film's superlative use of natural sound. Traffic and passing trains perpetually hum or roar in the background, the sitting-room scenes are punctuated with rustling papers and clinking cups, and in the brief country idyll the clear sounds of wind and birdsong say more about Del's sense of release than any amount of dialogue. Not, of course, that *Bronco Bullfrog* goes in for much of that anyway. According to Platts-Mills, the cast returned their scripts 'with only the first pages dirty.' And although the director eschews any such direct didactic message, the inarticulacy of his characters emphasises that this is one corner of the welfare state where a washing-machine and a telly are no adequate bribe for perfunctory education ('They don't bother with us') and humdrum jobs. Del's work as a welder is only glimpsed once, early on, but some idea of its withering monotony comes across in fierce close-up; and the scene is followed by another, wistfully symbolic, in which Del's employer shows him the pigeons he keeps and trains in his back garden (shades of *Kes*).

The notion of escape is a perpetual undercurrent in the film's scheme of ideas. Part of the glamour surrounding *Bronco* himself derives from his recent break from Borstal. Del cannot aspire to the same mythic heights, but even his trip to the West End with Irene, although it ends abortively in a Wimpy Bar, is seen as a detached fugitive idyll; filmed elliptically, its montage-type separateness is underlined by the (otherwise sparsely used) rock accompaniment. Between them, the motor bike and Irene represent Del's own impoverished hopes of release—geographical and emotional—but both dreams are won and lost in the course of the film. The bike is smashed to pieces by the tail of a passing lorry, and his love for Irene, however one interprets the ambivalent closing shot, must bow to society's demands in order to survive.

Defeatist as it sounds in cold print, *Bronco Bullfrog* is often cheerful, even affirmative, as an experience. While certainly not luring us into any social complacency, Platts-Mills none the less



Eva Marie Saint and George Segal in 'Loving'

counters the bleakness of his setting by endowing his characters with an enviable capacity for extracting excitement and impromptu fun from their resourceless environment. The funniest scene, ironically, comes near the end, when Del and Irene have taken refuge for the night with *Bronco Bullfrog*. Bronco's flat is crammed with the accumulated loot of past jobs, and as the lovers prepare to go to bed, he embarrasses them with a display of drunkenly effusive hospitality, offering an assortment of silk dressing-gowns, sheets and Philips electric blankets ('It's best quality stuff. You can't get much better than that'). Though its view of unfulfilment is ultimately pessimistic, the film's picaresque style never lets us forget that frustration has its funny side; and Del Walker's doleful misfit, irresistibly hangdog and put-upon, owes more to Keaton than to the documentary creatures of *We Are the Lambeth Boys*.

Loving (Columbia) also deals with a social misfit, but the hero in this case is a painter-cum-illustrator given to Bohemianism and wilfully anti-social gestures. *Loving* carries on where Irvin Kershner's *A Fine Madness* left off. Where Sean Connery's wild poet underwent lobotomy at the hands of a jealously Philistine society (happily, to no ill effect), George Segal's genius is dampened by a frosty marriage and the sordid allurements of an industrial contract which would make him rich advertising trucks. His wife Selma (Eva Marie Saint) worships him but is too easily depressed by spilt coffee cups, barbaric manners and frequent infidelity. By way of consolation he is having an affair with Grace, the daughter of a friend, but even she has had enough of him and is leaving the country.

The territory looks familiar, not to say hackneyed, but it turns out to be the very clichés of the artist-versus-society satire, forcing identification with the Genius against the massed icons of Bureaucracy, Social Decorum, Rat Race or whatever, that Don Devlin's screenplay (from a novel by J. M. Ryan) sets out to debunk. Brooks Wilson is not a champion of sanity or enlightenment; he is quite as crazy as the establishment, but goes about it in a different way. His particular horror of being patronised or tamed by society is neatly pointed up when a brief clip from *A Song to Remember* appears on TV, during the party scene, showing Chopin himself whittled down to the requirements of Hollywood soap opera. Refusing to be trammelled by commercialism or proprieties, Brooks takes pains to interrupt a condes-

cending and misinformed conversation about Vermeer, which he has drunkenly overheard, to tell the speaker he knows nothing about the subject, and supports the charge by rolling up his sleeves. At the Illustrators' Club he proposes an exhibition devoted exclusively to members who have recently committed suicide, then sits back to enjoy the gasps of scandalised distaste. Brilliantly played by a frenetic George Segal, Brooks Wilson is essentially second cousin to the Per Oscarsson of *Close to the Wind*, to whom all institutions, be they marriage or industry, are ripe for destruction.

Identification none the less is never really invited, partly because our sympathy is monopolised by Eva Marie Saint as the wife, exquisitely loyal and long-suffering, partly because Brooks' antics finally seem as egotistical and wastefully energetic as those of the consumer society he detests. And to rub the point in, his thirst for outrage backfires spectacularly when some boozy love play with Nelly in the woodshed is broadcast to the entire party by closed circuit television. The scene is the film's high point, managing at once to be hilariously funny, with the mesmerised guests clustering round the screen in an attempt to identify the naked figures, and also acutely painful as Selma's own amusement changes on recognition to a humiliated despair. Earlier condemned by Brooks as a 'big, beautiful trap', their marriage has seemed precarious throughout, strewn with warning lights like the divorced couple they visit while house-hunting whose frozen hostility to each other frightens Selma into tears. Despite much of the film's screwball comedy, there is no easy resolution to the matrimonial impasse—even if the film's glossy Eastman Colour coating finally conditions us into taking a little optimism on trust.

NIGEL ANDREWS

The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes

Because it plays on audience expectations in a number of interesting ways, Billy Wilder's film on the private life of Sherlock Holmes illustrates the acute predicament of a contemporary satirist. All satire, it would seem, attacks its own audience; but one of the results is that those most likely to appreciate the satire are those that least need to be converted, while those that need to be converted tend to find it irrelevant and thus escape its rhetorical power. It may therefore be a

contradiction in terms for a satire to aim at an audience. While Billy Wilder does not entirely succeed in working his way out of this trap, his effort creates a number of highly revealing insights.

To see how Wilder goes about deflating our expectations, it is enough to look at the title of the film and its opening credits. *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* (United Artists): we are, once again, to be admitted into the presence of that great man, the archetype of the lonely superman detective; on top of that, we are led to expect perhaps some private and scandalous revelations of a more or less salacious nature. While these expectations are fed by the title on the screen, the underlying images bring us to a nostalgic celebration at the shrine: as Watson's old dispatch box is opened in a bank vault, after his death, we observe and cherish, in close-up, the now dusty objects of the mythic cult: the tweed cap, the pipe, the syringe, the magnifying-glass. And best of all: a new manuscript which for reasons of delicacy has remained unpublished.

So the dust is removed, and we are once again present at 221B Baker Street as Holmes and Watson return from a case. And the works of Watson, in the *Strand Magazine*, stand revealed. Holmes can't stand the ridiculous costume he is forced to appear in simply because the public now expects him to; he notes with irritation that he has just received an invitation to play the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto, whereas, in fact, he would be barely competent to play in a music hall band; and he can't understand why Watson has made him out to be a misogynist. In short, Watson's bourgeois hero-worship has blown him up to superman glory (or movie star status)—and he doesn't enjoy it.

It's interesting that the portrait of Sherlock Holmes that follows seems to be an attempt to draw the consequences of the kind of analysis that Marshall McLuhan (among others) made of the Holmes figure (in *The Mechanical Bride*). He suggested that 'Holmes, the home-hater and woman-hater, is the hero of the "home-loving" and feminised middle class'; a Victorian Nietzschean figure who achieves his self-dramatisation 'on the inner stage of a mass dream'; the kind of Byronic figure who to 'the soul of the Watsonian shopkeeper and his family was the embodiment of the masochistic middle-class dream'; the lonely aesthete-detective, 'at once a rebel against the crude middle-class conformity and also a type of extreme initiative and individualism' (which helps to explain the ambiguity of his appeal to

the middle class). He is also a popular image of the detached scientific mind 'as the centre of a world of fantastic violence and malignity', as well as having the 'eye for clues and stomach for scalps' of the noble savage manhunter.

The important thing for McLuhan is not necessarily the individual metaphoric characterisations but 'the network of the varied roots of popular culture' which they provide. 'The indiscriminate cluster of items included in these images becomes in turn a means of "popular thinking" about society and politics. But real thinking or discrimination can't begin until the cluster has been considered genetically and analytically.'

This would seem to be the purpose of Wilder's analysis, which tries to illuminate the nature of the mass dream through an attack on the audience and its double standard as audience. This is seen quite clearly in relation to Holmes' sexuality. Having himself made Holmes a misogynist, Watson is still utterly scandalised and outraged when he discovers that Holmes has extricated himself from a delicate situation by pleading homosexuality. He begs for reassurance, asks (in the hope it won't be too presumptuous) if there haven't been any women in Holmes' life. Holmes' answer, very slowly, is that yes, the question is presumptuous. And the camera lingers on his cold face before he turns to leave. The question still hangs in the air, the episode is inconclusive; and by refusing either to confirm or to allay our suspicions Wilder offers us neither hero nor anti-hero. We are thrown back on an analysis of our participation in that mass dream which is embodied by the great detective. The incident attacks not only our sexual double standard but also the insatiable appetite of the mass dream to have its dirt certified by the proper gossip columnists.

Much the same kind of analysis is offered of Holmes' activity as detective in relation to the world of Victorian politics. Most of Holmes' actions and deductions are either bungled or insane. On the other hand, his brother Mycroft, whom we remember from the Conan Doyle stories as a large, indolent, enormously intelligent man, dividing his time between a Whitehall job and the Diogenes Club, here appears as the not so large but extremely efficient head of a secret government agency producing new war weapons. He knows everything ahead of Holmes and even predicts, to the minute, his future actions. In the contest between the two, Holmes doesn't stand a chance. Not only is big brother watching very closely over the country in the interests of the imperial (or 'imperialist') war machine; ultimately, the lonely detective-hero is pathetically inefficient when pitted against a large government agency.

The obvious symbol of the double standard of the mass society and its dreams is Queen Victoria herself, who appears as a small, conceited old woman, and declares herself hugely amused by Dr. Watson's writings in the *Strand Magazine*, but not at all amused when she discovers that Mycroft has been producing a nasty little submersible engine for destroying enemy ships with bombs. Wilder has devised a beautiful and implausible sequence which not only pits superman against submarine, but literally involves a descent into the unconscious where the submarine, powered by gas and manned by one sailor, two midgets, and three canaries, is disguised as the Loch Ness monster. That is Freud with a vengeance; and it also suggests that the adoration of the aesthete-detective serves to drive underground the political realities of empire building. (It might be amusing to read the whole film as an allegorical political satire with this kind of key: Queen Victoria = JFK; Holmes = RFK; Mycroft = J. Edgar Hoover; Watson = Schlesinger/Sorensen. Its irrelevance would only mask the fact that the pattern is basic.)

In terms of aesthetic strategy, Wilder's problem is that once you have destroyed a myth, what do you replace it with? In what image do

you cast the 'real' or 'private' Holmes? Wilder seems to have chosen a properly modern but somewhat sentimental version of the myth of Sisyphus. Its elements are a brilliant and shrewd protagonist who in the underworld (i.e. the demythologised version of the tale) is punished by the destructive potential of the 'system' and reduced to powerlessness by a futile task, resulting in his withdrawal from the active world, possibly into the private universe of drugs. Holmes, deprived of his extraordinary powers of perception and ratiocination, becomes a sentimentalist who has fallen in love with the girl who is a spy. We have seen them in pastoral sequences in Scotland, having a picnic by the lake (*vide Elvira Madigan*) and exploring the countryside on a bicycle (*vide Butch Cassidy*). The romantic strains of music in such passages certainly suggest a conscious satire. When, in the end, Holmes is informed by Mycroft that the girl, too, has become a fatal victim of the power game in which she was performing, the pattern is complete: the system, eventually, breaks everybody. The 5 per cent cocaine solution that he previously took out of boredom now signals the retreat to a totally 'private' world.

Watson, the eternal shopkeeper, treats the new myth with the same reverence that he offered the old one: in order not to sully it with his merely human hands, he reads the fatal letter with a pair of sugar tongs. As an image of the audience, this is problematic. In destroying one myth, Wilder certainly suggests that its replacement *could* be destroyed in the same way; and since the film seems to distrust itself (as well as its audience) and its ability to speak with authority about such things as public and private, appearance and reality, it leaves the audience no fixed point to stand on. We float. There is nothing to affirm: neither reality nor myth. In the end, Watson is not us, being separated from us by the mechanics of farce or the ironies of the director; we never *feel* sufficiently strongly the essential immorality of our performance as audience, our need for scandal, the vicariousness of ogling other human beings. The beautiful precision of the film's ambiguity, achieved in terms of I. A. L. Diamond's writing, as well as the pacing of the direction, and the dislocating effect of the editing (moments always held a trifle too long, depriving them of the finality of a narrative punch), leaves us suspended in a void. It may not be enough to end every sentence with a mark of interrogation in order to turn it into a significant question.

Thus, the dirt that Wilder spills is that of our own filthy minds; and in mining it for a trace of gold, he finds instead (forgive me) a rough industrial diamond, a brilliant, cold and cutting reflection of a long craft. The brilliance and the ambiguity are both Billy Wilder's trademarks. But they're far removed from the fertile imagination and wit which enabled Joyce to suggest that 'though he might have been more humble, there's no police like Holmes.' For all his brilliance, Wilder's film is cold and barren: it leaves us out of place, homeless, exiled. Like Joyce, perhaps, but also, ironically, like Billy Wilder himself.

PETER OHLIN

Figures in a Landscape

Losey's films are like icebergs, more than meets the eye. They are little chunks cut off from larger ice-caps, each film an 'interlude' examining the fragile division between private illusion and inevitable reality, exploring the interdependence of characters and environment, between figures and landscapes. On the one level, they display an evident moral seriousness or reveal a concrete truth in conventional plot mechanics. On another, more abstract level, the films have disconcerting and provocative moods, by virtue of a *mise-en-scène* which transcends and alters the sense and impact of the script. For Losey, the mood is the message. His films are also like sphinxes—his 'couvade' with

Sherlock Holmes (Robert Stephens) and brother Mycroft (Christopher Lee).



Resnais (not to mention Beckett, Ionesco and Pinter) reveals an indulgence in riddles as a legitimate ploy to interest the sophisticated spectator. For him, metaphors for moods can easily lose their meaning and become simply bric-à-brac.

In *Accident*, *Boom* and *Secret Ceremony*, there is a preoccupation with mirroring the closed worlds of his characters by means of ornate, oppressive decor, reflections of their private obsessions. *Figures in a Landscape* (Cinema Center/Fox), thankfully, redresses the balance in favour of the mood rather than the bric-à-brac. It is not a baroque film, but a film composed with the sensibilities of a poet, handling a scene in a certain way because that way is true to a certain mood. It is war and the two protagonists, their hands tied, are on the run in enemy territory, pursued by a co-piloted helicopter. The border would bring them freedom, and the film's action involves a long trek from sea to the snows to rid themselves of the threat of the faceless enemy. Being a Losey film, the central interest is in the moral polarities of the men on the run, and in the antagonism

responds only to the demands of the gut (he steals bread from the dead villager's open coffin; he doesn't know what's in the three types of tin they've stolen, nor how to open them, only that they're food; and he giggles with delight at the laxative effect of condensed milk) and to a survival instinct. In short, he has no head—when the helicopter pilots taunt him he flies off into a fantasy about them decapitating him so he could have kicked his own head, 'could have scored a goal with it.'

Ansell, twenty years younger, is a complete antithesis. He is a virgin soldier who uses his head. He has the gumption to bring a tin-opener, he knows when to lie low, he plans the abortive blowing up of the helicopter's petrol tank. But he belongs to a different class, presumably public-school, and has been 'brought up on the bottle.' All the headstrong Hotspur-like mistakes are Mac's, yet Ansell depends on him, allows him to give the orders, and relies on him for human contact—it is not a pupil-tutor relationship, but one in which each character makes up for the other's inadequacies. For Ansell, this means capitulation.



'Figures in a Landscape': Robert Shaw's final confrontation with the helicopter.

and dominance of the one with the other. It would be intellectually justifiable even to assume that they are but two facets of a single personality, but that is not the point.

Mac (Robert Shaw) and Ansell (Malcolm McDowell) must individually confront the incongruity of their environment, and this confrontation demands self-analysis and self-awareness—the movement towards awareness and integration is the fabric of the film; and the establishment of truth, which is at the same time the moment of dissolution, is the end of the film. At the border post in the mountains, Mac cannot resist the fatal complicity of those with the 'killer instinct', and on hearing the insect-drone of the pursuing helicopter, turns to shoot at the 'great black bat'. He chooses to chance his machine-gun in revenge when freedom is so near, and dies a few paces from the border.

Mac is instinctual, not a professional soldier, but a 'country boy' who 'got old'. As he says, 'Anybody can have a war now; I mean, you just get some equipment and you start, don't you.' He is not aware of himself ('Sometimes I'm very stupid, my wife has told me that') and

If *Figures in a Landscape* is merely about the interaction and reliance of two men at war, then it is not altogether successful. Shaw's script does not enhance Barry England's novel—the nihilism is there but an over-obvious melodramatic strain creeps in—and one gets the impression that Shaw wrote himself a cameo part, but left Ansell's credibility somewhat thin. McDowell can't quite cope with lines like 'We're nothing but animals' or 'What has become of us?' Similarly, the psychological crispness of the characterisations is not very convincing—McDowell is a shade too sloppy and imploring, and Shaw too caricatural. Even if one could submit that the dialogue has a Brechtian enunciation, it would be difficult to show how this complements the moral progression of the characters. Improbabilities of the plot such as the 'miracle' of the farmers' sluice-water dousing the fire in the cane-field, and the inadequacy of the border post to contain so large a patrol, are further elements which vitiate plausibility.

But it is nonsense to interpret *Figures* simply in terms of plot mechanics, acting, or whether the narrative is feasible. Each scene relies for

its effectiveness on the way the landscape, and the characters' actions within that landscape, relate to something altogether outside the action. Direction for Losey consists of interpreting the action at the same time as presenting it, and the plot becomes but a tuning-fork sounding out more abstract truths. By technical means such as camera movement, angle, framing and cutting, certain themes are developed which are inherent in the action without being necessarily explicit.

Some examples. Losey's penchant for animal symbols is well known. The helicopter sounds like a droning insect, hovering over its quarry, buzzing aggressively in front of the glaring sun; and twice in the film there are cuts from a hawk to the helicopter, underlining the predatory vindictiveness of the enemy. The collusion does not end there, but the helicopter becomes an autonomous participant, the camera dipping into gulches in search of its prey, or curling round the body of Mac at the end. The facelessness of the pilots makes their mission all the more macabre. *Figures* is rich in other equations: the scared horses of the opening shots relate to the two escapers, distilling a wild hope, yet they are superseded later in the film by domestic animals like the pigs shot emerging from the cane-field and the donkeys trudging over the burnt-out vegetation—comments, 'indexes' if you like, on the progressive entrapment of Mac and Ansell. Another device is the foreground framing of plants, not included just because they look pretty but because they mark, by their colour and species, stages in the action. The incident with the goatherd, for example, is in parenthesis, beginning with a yellow rock-plant and ending with a mauve thistle, flourishes which extend our appreciation of the developing narrative.

And, of course, the landscape itself changes as the journey continues, through increasingly more civilised environments—the primeval (the beach), the pastoral, the agricultural, the mechanical (remember that electric train which dissolves so very slowly), to the futuristic (there is a strange otherworldliness at the border). There are even linking props which reflect the condition of Man and the two men—notably the scene amongst the statues in the village church, when Mac breaks bread and sings that his 'soul goes marching on'; and the upturned car revealed at the end of the tin-opening sequence. These are not expressionist impedimenta but symbolic keys turned in the lock of the film, opening new doors.

If *Figures* is an iceberg, then its submerged portion deals with the need for man to come to terms with his own instincts and social sanctions in order to confront his *geist*, to clarify the dialectic between one's responses to life and one's awareness of it. If it is a sphinx, its riddle is that freedom isn't what it seems. And if there is a discrepancy between Losey and his own vision due to the collaboration of others, perhaps this is the inescapable product of his indebtedness to a system that by its nature can do little but hamper him.

MIKE WALLINGTON

L'Aveu

In 1951 Artur London, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in Czechoslovakia, was arrested by the secret police and charged with crimes against the State. Interrogated and tortured by officials acting under orders from Moscow, he finally succumbed, confessed his guilt, and was arraigned before a show trial with thirteen of his colleagues, eleven of whom, including the Party Secretary Rudolf Slansky, were later executed. London himself was released from prison in 1956, rehabilitated (courtesy of the post-Stalin liberalisation programme), and now lives in France, where his account of his experiences was first published.

These are the facts which Costa-Gavras'

L'Aveu (Warner Bros.) reconstructs. In many ways *L'Aveu* is like *Z*, the target merely shifted from the totalitarian right to the totalitarian left. But where *Z* was an inflammatory political thriller, crudely opportunist in the way it delivered its message, this new film is an altogether more disciplined piece of work, the tone less strident, the issues more complex. Which means, of course, that while it is the better film, it is considerably less effective as populist cinema, particularly since its protagonists are not the readily identifiable bosses of a contemporary régime but shadowy figures from a Central European past most of us have forgotten about. This is the ultimate paradox of Costa-Gavras' kind of political cinema: the more responsive the film is to the complexities of the case, the less its impact is likely to be. Less immediate, less blatantly manipulative than *Z*, *L'Aveu* offers (superficially, at least) less opportunity for audience identification; a case-history rather than an indictment.

But a case-history of what? Ostensibly of Artur London's arrest, interrogation and trial; by implication of the protective machinery of the totalitarian state, with its private fears and public treacheries, the *huis clos* of the monolithic party system. The opening has all the driving urgency of *Z*, as London (Yves Montand) is shadowed through deserted streets by sinister, mackintoshed men in black cars and bundled off blindfolded to an underground labyrinth of cells. Here, as throughout *Z*, the style is all restless zooms and oblique angles; later, as the process of interrogation gets under way, the pace slips into relentless slow gear. Costa-Gavras is good with the bleak, repetitious detail of the methods used to break London, and Jorge Semprun's script adroitly moves about in time (London was a youthful anarchist, fought with the International Brigade, survived a Nazi concentration camp) to provide the motivation for London's dogged, almost religious confidence in the infallibility of the Party. The accumulation of detail—food offered and immediately withdrawn, the semantic tricks which the interrogators use to assemble the confession—effectively conveys the victim's disintegration, from outraged disbelief through self-doubting bewilderment to the final willing acquiescence in the interrogator's assurance that 'confession is a superior form of self-criticism'.

Watching the film, one is carried along by all this obsessive detail. The little manipulative nudges seem unimportant, legitimate theatrical devices. Stalin and Gottwald look down from the wall of a ministerial office, as tantalising as the half-glimpsed royal portraits in *Z*; London's wife (Simone Signoret) talks to a reassuring official and we cut to the secret police disconnecting her telephone; an abrupt zoom in to a Russian guard's red cap badge heralds a newsreel montage of great moments in revolutionary history. On reflection, though, awkward questions pose themselves. 'We judge the past by the truth as the Party sees it now,' the chief interrogator tells London. But in this spider's web of intrigue and betrayal what is the truth and what merely half-truth? A new, revised version of Soviet history, which makes no mention of the Warsaw Pact occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968, has just appeared in Moscow. In *L'Aveu* we are presented with a set of facts, most of them verifiable; it's the facts which aren't verifiable that pose the questions.

During the trial, for instance, one of the defendants 'dries' as he recites his confession. Shuffling with embarrassment, he loses his trousers and the whole court—including the men on trial for their lives—is engulfed in laughter. As the defendants are led away, the wretched man turns back to grin knowingly at the camera. Costa-Gavras cuts into this scene a flash-forward to the ashes of the executed men being scattered over an icy road. It's a grim joke, perhaps a fair one as a piece of straight audience manipulation; but a joke on whom? If we, the audience who smile uncomfortably back at the man's seeming complicity with the camera, have



'*L'Aveu*': the arrest of Artur London (Yves Montand)

no way of authenticating a minor detail like this, how far can we trust the film on more important statements of fact? There is a passing reference to London's approval of the Rajk trial in Hungary; but only a passing reference, and rather obscured at that. And what of the Czechoslovak Party's complicity in the purging of Koce Xoxe in Albania and Kostov in Bulgaria?

Like the defendants reciting their methodically rehearsed confessions, Costa-Gavras presents us with the facts programmed to sound sympathetic echoes in the liberal conscience (the casting of Montand, who seems in danger of becoming the cinema's romantic stereotype of the victim of 20th century oppression, amounts in itself to an invitation to take sides). The film ends, for instance, with London returning to Prague on the very day the city is occupied by Russian tanks, which is the kind of facile journalistic ploy that undermines confidence. Objectivity is obviously the last thing one expects of a film which sets out to expose the machinations of a Stalinist régime. But one does echo the question put to London as he tells his story to French friends in 1965. You have described the logic of hell, one of them says, you have shown us the 'how'; but don't we also need to be told something of the 'why'?

DAVID WILSON

The Ballad of Cable Hogue

What became of Deke Thornton, the Robert Ryan character in *The Wild Bunch*, last seen brooding in the dust as his bounty-hunting allies pillaged the corpses of his former friends? He may, perhaps, have stayed on to head that straggling band of peasant revolutionaries who came up out of nowhere to ask his help in their fight to liberate Mexico; or maybe he changed his name to Cable Hogue, joined up with a pair of freebooting prospectors in search of profit and adventure, and was left by them to die of thirst in an Arizona desert.

Figuratively speaking, of course, since there is no precise overlap in dates and characters between *The Wild Bunch* and *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* (Warner), simply a continuing thematic concern which helps to shed light on the later film. The similarities between the two are striking, despite the switch from tragedy to comedy, and even if one forbears to make the obvious *rapprochement* between the scorpions burned alive in *The Wild Bunch* and the gila monster blasted in two by a shotgun at the beginning of *Cable Hogue*. For both films feature heroes unable to adapt to a changing

world (the automobile reappears, even more emphatically emblematic of the disappearance of the days when a man, a horse and a gun could be sufficient unto themselves). Both films start by placing their heroes in situations from which there is no escape; and both end with death closing the trap.

The difference is that the hero of the new film is no longer Pike Bishop but Deke Thornton; not, in other words, the outlaw left obstinately stranded like a fish out of water by the receding tide of freedom in the old West, so that the only thing left for him to do is die, but the one who accepts change in order to keep in step with the times, and who, once on the side of the law, finds himself trapped between the old morality and the new. Deke Thornton, not being the central character of *The Wild Bunch*, could sit grieving on the fence, refusing actually to pull the trigger, but also refusing to interfere as Bishop plunged towards self-immolation, taking with him the whole way of life they had shared. Cable Hogue (Jason Robards), however, has to make his choice.

Of his antecedents we are told nothing. He is born, as it were, in that moment in the desert when the gila monster he is about to kill for food is shattered by an intruding bullet and his two colleagues proceed to strip him of everything he possesses, including the water he needs to survive. Possibly an outlaw, possibly as ruthless as his friends, and certainly no stranger to guns, this man yet retains an innocence and an impulse towards common humanity which is cruelly trampled when he gets the drop on the two predators, they laughingly persuade him that it was all a joke, and once again hold him up to ransom.

Left alone to die in the desert with a threat of vengeance on his lips, Cable Hogue confides his problem to God. 'Ain't had no water since yesterday, Lord... Just thought I'd mention it, amen.' With his second request for water, he promises faithfully never to do it again, whatever it was he was doing. The third, a simple statement of suffering after four days without water, is answered by his muddy boot, betraying the presence of an underground spring. 'Told you I was gonna live,' he cries, annexing the credit to his own will to survive. 'This is Cable Hogue talking! Me, Cable Hogue!' And he proceeds to exploit his waterhole, the only one for miles around, as a heaven-sent opportunity to make his fortune.

Illuminatingly, Sam Peckinpah has described his film as 'a new version of Sartre's *The Flies* with a touch of *Keystone Cops*.' And the latter predominate as Cable Hogue, a cross between

the Laurel of *Way Out West* and the Bogart of *The Treasure of Sierra Madre*, defends his oasis by shooting the first man to seek to use it, is befriended by a courteous preacher with a penchant for 'saving' nubile girls, and falls in love with a prostitute who has her name strategically embroidered under a purple heart on her panties. On several occasions Peckinpah even resorts to speeded-up motion, quite unnecessarily since the truculent Sennett touch is already beautifully present in the gesture with which Hogue up-ends a jug of water over the floor (and his prospective backer) in a graphic illustration of his discovery, in his choice of a chamber-pot as a love-offering to Hildy (Stella Stevens), or in the dual-purpose collar, dog or lay, which the preacher (David Warner) swivels round depending upon which best suits the seduction or hand.

At the same time, however, Peckinpah never lets one lose sight of Sartre's man who defied God. Blessings are showered upon Cable Hogue by a world grown benevolent since the appearance of the miraculous spring, and he cheerfully accepts them all: the two stage-coach drivers who give him their whisky after his emergence from the desert, the banker who puts up the money for his dream, the preacher who helps him build the humble beginnings of 'Cable Springs', and above all Hildy, who comes to share his Eden in Peckinpah's first romantic vision—soft focus evenings as she appears shimmering in a white nightgown at the door of his cabin, 'Butterfly Mornings' as they share the sun-kissed days heralded by the exquisite folk-song.

But unlike Hildy, who is willing to bury the past at one fell swoop—and unlike the preacher, who simply turns his back on unpleasantness (i.e. rampaging husbands) to seek a new flock elsewhere—Cable Hogue cannot adapt to the change in his world. Still harking back to the old ways, he refuses to leave for San Francisco with Hildy and his new fortune until he has exacted revenge on the two men who left him to die. When the moment comes, however, he at last realises, too late, that the time is past; and he pays for his fault, baulked of the idyll with Hildy that lay in his grasp, by dying to save one of his tormentors from being run over by a car. Like all Peckinpah heroes, he is a victim of his own inflexibility; but like Steve Judd in *Guns in the Afternoon*, another hero with a direct line to the Old Testament, he probably 'entered his house justified'. After all, he dies crushed by the third motor-car in his experience, and it was his third prayer that God answered.

TOM MILNE

The Adventures of Gerard

Films that defy categorisation do so at their own risk: at least in this country. Since Art and Entertainment are so rigidly demarcated in distributors' minds, Skolimowski's bewildering *The Adventures of Gerard* was kept in cold storage for months before its appearance. One sees the problem. The film is too naive to be Art and too sophisticated to be Entertainment. It also looks as if Skolimowski made it up as he went along, not so improbably in the light of some of his own confessions ('Laziness lies behind everything I have done'). *Gerard* in fact is the sort of film that only an established director would be allowed to get away with. United Artists provided 3,000,000 dollars and a script based on Conan Doyle's Napoleonic stories, but over both Skolimowski was given a free hand.

The result is a sort of cross between *Waterloo* and *The Running, Jumping and Standing Still Film*. With the first it shares Napoleon and Wellington, a screenplay by H. A. L. Craig, and Jack Hawkins as an eccentric brigand, called General Millefleur. Like Lester, however, who seems stylistically the nearest point of

reference, Skolimowski aspires to complete visual anarchy ('a world gone topsy-turvy...'), narrates Gerard's voice early on, and the camera gyrates to turn Napoleon's army upside down), breaking formal barriers to achieve a fluid comic style. The story is rightly skeletal. Etienne Gerard (a superbly lunatic performance by Peter McEnery) is singled out by Napoleon, as the most stupid man in his army, to carry a 'fake' message to Marshal Massena, who is laying siege to the Spanish castle of Morales, instructing him to withdraw his troops. Napoleon hopes that Gerard's stupidity will allow the British to intercept the message and wrongly presume that the siege is abandoned. But Gerard's erratic inspiration, plus the cooperation of the Countess of Morales (Claudia Cardinale), sees him through every crisis and the message is delivered. Only the accidental blowing up of the castle by its blind Count prevents Napoleon's humiliation.

The plot is simply on hand to plant signposts when the anarchy flags. Despite some witty dialogue and good set-up gags, the film's impetus is neither verbal nor histrionic but derives from a frenzied extension/burlesque of cinematic idiom. The cerebral, straight-to-camera soliloquy, Godard-style, is transformed into Gerard's perpetual braggadocio, directed unembarrassed and full-volume at the audience. Skolimowski peppers the action with accelerated film (and sound) and the occasional hiccupped insert. Chasing a fugitive wheel, a black-caped coachman scuttles down a cliff in speeded motion, jerks to a halt and then dives slow and swallow-like into the lake at the bottom. Cardinale, throwing a tantrum, gibbers in speeded-up sound. Gerard's eulogy to his emperor is punctuated with a sudden flash of Napoleon on horseback and framed in gilt.

If the film threatens at times to degenerate into a parade of conjuring tricks, it is redeemed partly by the air of baroque, Munchhausen-like fantasy that pervades Gerard's adventures, rich in such casually surrealist details as General Millefleur's accident-prone human dining-table; partly by the fact that Gerard is a genuine Skolimowski hero, quirky and single-minded in his pursuit of self-fulfilment, a Napoleonic counterpart of Marc in *Le Départ*. For all its chaotic surface, *Gerard* carries a distinctive signature.

NIGEL ANDREWS

'The Ballad of Cable Hogue': Stella Stevens, Jason Robards



The Railway Children

A canny adaptation of the most noticeably thumbled volume that stood in grandmother's childhood collection, *The Railway Children* (MGM-EMI) delicately preserves period detail and a guileless world of adventure and mystery, while briskly shifting its emotional weight from E. Nesbit's championing of a commonsensical good humour and good neighbourliness to the faintly more modern mood of some lightly eccentric character comedy.

Dealing directly but sensitively with the three children themselves, the film enjoys the simple delight of their games and discoveries with no stickily trailing suggestion of false charm or cynical knowingness. The narrative is a fairly loose structure of incidents, beginning with the children's removal to a house in the country after their father is mysteriously forced to leave home, then establishing the intermittent contact they make with the world outside through the railway that runs past the meadow at the bottom of their property, and eventually their constructive use of its agency to help conjure their father back from a dark adult limbo of court cases and conspiracies. In its way, the railway is obviously one of the characters, with as many facets to its personality as the children have names for the trains—the Green Dragon, the Fearsome Fly-by-Night—that travel on the line. The various incidents that involve them with this monster toy form a pleasantly miraculous chain of incidents and coincidences that finally leads them to their father.

Holding the adventures together and at the same time minding the children, Miss Nesbit in the novel unabashedly intervenes to pick her characters up to comment on the growth of some quality, or explain some notably selfless or outrageous act. Lionel Jeffries' effective substitute is the very discretion of his portrait of his slightly older-seeming set of children. Their behaviour seems at once honestly spontaneous and by turns—as Jenny Agutter as Bobbie naturally becomes dominant—delicately modified to fit necessary changes in mood. Understated and barely implied, such changes often seem to have arrived rather abruptly; the discrepancy is most noticeable at the end where Jeffries gives Bobbie as narrator a final statement of summation and tactful withdrawal that

belongs, in part, to E. Nesbit as commentator and surrogate guardian.

In other directions, Jeffries has caught the quiet magic of the story with a deliberate heightening of effect. With remarkable assurance in his first feature as writer and director, his personality as a comic dictates the most colourful characters in the film; figures whose zestful comedy takes on a life of its own, quite different from any simple caricature the children may be imagined to be projecting on to the adult world, from Aunt Emma who arrives (albeit somewhat Mary Poppins-ish) to rule the house as a well-equipped 'raj', to the central figure of Perks the porter, played by Bernard Cribbins with an eloquent sense of duty and huffy pride.

Period detail is also well assimilated: brightly gleaming during the set-pieces of birthday party and celebration, yet really treated with a quiet and unaffected candour, befitting, say, a Victorian householder. 'They were just ordinary suburban children, and they lived with their Father and Mother in an ordinary red-brick-fronted villa, with coloured glass in the front door, a tiled passage that was called a hall, a bathroom with hot and cold water, electric bells, french windows, and a good deal of white paint...' A similar sentimental simplicity perhaps accounts as much as anything for the particular charm and innocence of *The Railway Children*.

RICHARD COMBS

Heart of Britain

'The winds of war blow across the hills and moorlands of Yorkshire and Derbyshire. They stir the grasses in the sheep valleys of Cumberland and ruffle the clear surface of Ullswater...' The opening words of Jennings' own wartime documentary *Heart of Britain* could be the cue for Robert Vas in his tribute to Jennings, made for BBC-TV and also called *Heart of Britain*. It opens with fields of grain tossed into restless waves by the rushing squall that precedes a storm. Gradually the whistle of the wind is lost in the throb of engines and the scalp tingles with a familiar frisson as the roar of bombers fills the sky. Immediately the marriage of image and sound stirs a host of memories, and already we are close to the heart of the matter. This ability to select the expressive image and to match it with the most evocative of sounds is the key to Jennings' method. Behind the inspired editing there was a very private man who was a painter and a poet but who yet found his most complete satisfaction in the complex semi-industrial enterprise of film-making. This is the paradox Vas



'The Railway Children': Jenny Agutter, Sally Thomsett, Gary Warren

sets out to explore, using stills, paintings and film extracts woven together with a technique so precise that it rivals Jennings' own in its evocation of a personal vision.

Seaside snapshots recall a happy middle-class childhood, a drawing of ships at sea inscribed 'England for Ever' links the embryo painter with the youthful patriot, some jerky footage of cycling and boating undergraduates brings Cambridge of the Twenties sharply into focus. Photographs of Jennings as a student already have a strong period flavour. With his prominent Adam's apple, large nose and blond cowlick he looks the typical English intellectual—highly intelligent but oddly indecisive, like a tensely trained racehorse who has not chosen which course to run.

He was painting, writing verse and reading massively. Blake and Gray were strong influences and he was very conscious of the clash between 'the two cultures' long before the phrase was coined. A vast anthology on the link between art and technology to be called 'Pandemonium' was a project he cherished but never completed. He entered films almost by accident in the old GPO Film Unit, and there seems little doubt that at first he had a fairly low opinion of the medium. Realisation of the possibilities of film as poetry seems to have hit Jennings just as war broke out, and he made his first film as director in 1939.

It was no accident that the best of his work relates directly to the war. It forced the creative adrenalin to flow and broke down inhibitions as well as class barriers. The very English reticence, the almost chilly self-absorption which he seems sometimes to have shown in his private life, was swept away, allowing his lifelong obsession with English literature and tradition

to express itself in a form both popular and universal.

In *Heart of Britain* clips from Jennings' films are allowed to speak for themselves without explanation or analysis—Olivier's inimitable voice in *Words for Battle*, Myra Hess playing at the National Gallery, the firemen arriving for duty to the tune of 'One Man Went to Mow'. They are in black and white, of course, but they fit without any feeling of incongruity among colour shots of his painting, the island of Poros where he died, and interviews with people who worked on the films. Unhappily Stewart McAllister, whose contribution as editor must have been vital, is no longer available to say how he and Jennings achieved their close and crucial counterpoint. Lindsay Anderson acknowledges an influence, Stuart Legg talks of early days at the GPO Film Unit, Mrs. Jennings and her daughters speak freely about some of the difficulties of living close to the self-absorption of a creative mind, but nothing emerges to explain the sense of anti-climax that hangs over his post-war work or the impression of a man who found his fulfilment in war but lost direction when the battle was over. And this, after all, is the question that has always fascinated admirers of Jennings. How was it that a man of outstanding intellectual equipment, having achieved mastery of a medium which seemed so ideally to combine his varied interests, yet spent the last years of his life making some relatively undistinguished documentaries?

After *Fires Were Started* the way would seem to have been open for a future in feature production. He did in fact do a draft for a film of *Far from the Madding Crowd* which never went into production. Perhaps the industry did not provide the opportunities, or it may be that there were conditions that he could not accept. It would have been interesting to have some questions raised about this and it would also have been rewarding to hear a little more about the ideas and concepts that motivated Jennings, perhaps from his Cambridge contemporaries. There is a tiny contribution from Kathleen Raine, but nothing from Bronowski, Empson or Charles Madge.

But one must be wary of falling into the old critical trap of complaining that a film has not done what it did not set out to do. *Heart of Britain* was made for the huge television audience many of whom must be presumed to be hearing of Jennings for the first time. What it communicates with total success is the emotional response that the best of Jennings evokes. This is an achievement to be grateful for.

BRENDA DAVIES

County Mayo Gu Bragh from page 44

it. I went out and pioneered, campaigned for him and everything else. Come on, Mac, for chrissake, those are stupid questions. For a man from Mayo, whose forebears are from Mayo, to ask... the people from Mayo are noted for their shrewdness and smartness. We're a smart, shrewd, poor race. Proud as hell. You don't say 'County Mayo,' say 'County Mayo, God help us.'

When you started your career, why did you direct only Westerns?

Because the pay was good. I still enjoy doing a Western. If a story came along, I'd go out and do it now, but hell, they're not coming. I get two or three scripts a week, but they're remakes or rewrites of pictures I've already done. Or they're all filthy or sexy, and that would be against my nature, my religion, and my natural inclinations to do those things.

When you're planning a film, do you draw

the shots in advance?

No.

How do you go about planning the shots?

Walk on the set, look at the set, look at the locations. You do it by instinct.

You don't like to move the camera much, do you?

No, because it throws the audience off. It says, 'This is a motion picture. This isn't real.' I like to have the audience feel that this is the real thing. I don't like to have the audience interested in the camera. The camera movement disturbs them.

You make a point in a lot of your movies that 'This is what really happened.' You start off with 'This is the real Wyatt Earp, this is the real Abe Lincoln.'

I try to.

Are you still working on o.s.s., about Wild Bill Donovan?

Yeah.

How's it coming?

Not very well. It's hard to get a writer out here, you know. I mean, I don't know any of the writers.

Are there any other projects you'd like to make?

No.

I'm sorry I asked some silly questions.

Well, it isn't that, but everybody asks the same questions, all you people, and I'm sick and tired of trying to answer them, because I don't know the answers. I'm just a hard-nosed, hard-working ex-director, and I'm trying to retire gracefully.

So you don't like people asking you about your old movies?

No, I've forgotten them, I don't know what they're about. I'm just trying to live out my life in peace and comfort and quiet. So I'm going to say *au revoir*, God bless you, County Mayo guide...

Erin gu bragh.

County Mayo gu bragh.

BOOK REVIEWS

SERGEI EISENSTEIN AND UPTON SINCLAIR: *The Making and Unmaking of Que Viva Mexico*

Edited by Harry M. Geduld and Ronald Gottesman.

THAMES AND HUDSON, £6.30.

I don't know, I really don't know... All my scientific and archivist predilections scream out that a book made up of the documents relating to the Sinclair-Eisenstein Mexican fiasco must be worthwhile, and yet, and yet... What can even a book of 428 pages of highly authentic basic source material do at this stage to clarify an issue that should already be crystal clear?

There was a time when the mutual accusations of the partisans flew thick and fast: Eisenstein was a megalomaniac, incompetent, a trickster, Sinclair a callous, philistine iconoclast, under his wife's thumb. And there was some point, no doubt, to all this sound and fury in early days, while the chief actors in the drama were still alive and vigorous, the material intact, the masterpiece capable of being rescued. But surely the dust has settled enough now for it to be possible for all who understand even a little about cinema to appreciate that the causes of the calamity lay deeper, not in any mischief or ill-intent in these two men, but in their whole character and background, so unsuited to the task too lightly undertaken in their ill-starred partnership.

However, scholarship must have its due, no doubt, and I suppose it can only be an advantage to have this rich array of textual evidence available on library shelves for the sporadic interest of future generations. It consists of nearly 200 letters, mainly to and from Sinclair and extracted from his files now at Indiana University, together with relevant documents, contracts, quotations from press cuttings, etc. The editors have made their selection and arrangement extremely well. There is a splendid bibliography (though the index is defective). Their linking commentary is judicious and helpful, and although here and there I think they miss a point rather badly, this does not matter as the reader is provided with matter sufficient to work it out for himself. The brief introductory passages dealing with Hollywood show many minor misunderstandings, but these in no way vitiate the book's main purpose.

What we have is a remarkable study in human weakness: Eisenstein the ruthless, brilliant, charming artist; Sinclair the some-

what humourless, radical, but sheltered, lion. These could never have understood one another. Tied together, they were bound to agonise and perish. Basically, the frustrated artist-genius is bound to evoke more sympathy in this situation than his philistine, and grudging, paymaster. But let us be fair, this is a romantic, not a moral judgment. Art on the one hand, pedestrian propaganda on the other, are not easy to gauge with one yardstick. Your taste, and mine, are not necessarily the correct measure.

What devil of vanity got into Sinclair that made him interrupt the arrangements made for Eisenstein's return to Moscow via a picture engagement in Japan? For that is what he did do, though I warned him against it, when Monosson and I had the other route all planned and worked out. He starts the Mexican project gaily and virtuously, lightly assuming responsibilities of whose nature he had not the least idea. The editors give some sentences Sinclair prepared to help raise capital from investors: 'Having come to know Eisenstein well' (he did not know him at all), 'we are convinced of his personal, as well as artistic integrity' (true, if you mean he was ready for any personal sacrifice, as well as to sacrifice anyone else, when beneath the sway of creative passion). 'He will do what he agrees to do, and we do not see how such a picture can possibly fail to return the money invested in it.'

At this moment there was no script, no theme, Sinclair did not know how pictures were made, how Eisenstein worked, how finished films were marketed, what value a documentary could have in which markets, or *anything*. He made much subsequently of the fact that Eisenstein said he would make a picture in Mexico for 25,000 dollars (then £5,000) in three months. Eisenstein had never been in Mexico, did not know how much a dollar would buy there, what facilities (if any) he would be allowed, and had never in his life organised or costed or produced a picture there or in the U.S.S.R. or anywhere else, being a director and not a producer. All this, if he had reflected even for a minute, Sinclair must have known. Yet Sinclair must have believed what he wrote to raise money—'for Brutus is an honourable man.' And on top of all this Sinclair appointed as manager his wife's brother, who had never before had anything to do with pictures in any shape or form.

What happened? Of course,

once on location the director's pictorial appetite grew. And of course Sinclair gave in bit by bit. How could either he or his brother-in-law, or any layman, for that matter, judge where to draw the line? As Sinclair, facing demand after demand, saw upon the screen rushes with repetitive take after take he could not understand—no nearer arriving at a tangible comprehension of the director's purpose than he was at the beginning, not because (as he supposed) of Eisenstein's wilfulness but because, for the latter, creation of an unfamiliar location picture of this kind could not but be a continuous process not easily explicable—it must have been like wrestling with the Boyg. And as Eisenstein, battling against ill health, bad weather, bureaucratic obstruction, gathered in miraculous material at what it became evident was the incredibly low figure of some £10,000 plus, Sinclair's protestations must have appeared miserable cheeseparing. So that what developed as misgiving, mistrust, anxiety on either side, grew to panic, hatred and—on Sinclair's side—malice.

Reading these letters and documents is like turning the pages of the diary of a madman. Only a Dostoyevsky could do justice to such a decline in a respected man. Sinclair became crazed. He writes to Eisenstein denouncing him for wasteful shooting and extravagance and, by the same post, solicits finance from patrons because the film will be of unexampled beauty and will be one-fourth the cost in cents per foot (he is right) of any comparable production. He promises Eisenstein to send the film to him in Moscow and reneges on this promise as soon as Eisenstein is gone.

Finally, he writes to everybody that he will say nothing derogatory of Eisenstein unless himself attacked, and promptly spreads wide the information that he found obscene drawings in Eisenstein's luggage—doodles twice as innocent as smoking-room stories and often ten times as witty. While Eisenstein is in Mexico and Sinclair needs him to stay, Sinclair tells Stalin that rumours of Eisenstein's disloyalty to the U.S.S.R. are false and that all the latter's friends will confirm this. As soon as Sinclair has decided to do without Eisenstein he writes a long letter to Stalin (and others to others), saying that Eisenstein wanted to desert to the capitalist world, and that that was why he stayed so long in Mexico; while Mrs. Sinclair is busy telling people that the whole trouble is due to a Communist plot by Eisenstein trying to discredit Socialists like herself and Upton.

It is not a pretty story. Finding yourself out of your depth and with a seemingly open-ended commitment is never pleasant, and the poor Sinclairs were sorely tried and made to pay a heavy penalty for their blind optimism in wishing to play Maecenas without the where-withal in knowledge, taste or cash. It was not the project that was expensive. With all its troubles, it

is agreed that the picture could have been brought in, completed, for the absurdly low cost of around £15,000.

With that much in the kitty, the love and harmony might never have broken. Without it, the luckless patrons made every possible mistake. In the end, out of spleen they deprived themselves of the one man who might still have saved everything, for with him everything was in the cutting and he could not decide that till he sat down to it; thus they ensured that their fairy gold turned to dross. Read it. You will see, as I do, that the Sinclairs were not evil. Only panic-stricken. And virtuous. Lord save us from those who are too self-righteous to be self-critical. They must have thought, amazing as it may seem to anyone who reads these letters, that they were in the right. Why else should they have preserved them?

IVOR MONTAGU

THE FILMS OF ORSON WELLES

By Charles Higham

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS, £5.20.

Charles Higham has written what is clearly intended to be a major book on Welles. There are fifteen chapters, lavishly illustrated, the first entitled 'The Man, the Beginnings', the last, 'Envoi'. The intervening thirteen are each devoted to a single Welles film, in chronological order, except for Chapter Fourteen which deals with two television films, *The Fountain of Youth* and *The Immortal Story*. There are two appendices, a filmography, a select bibliography and an index. Each chapter offers a section of biographical, historical and technical information; a synopsis; and a brief critical essay. Doubts have been raised in an earlier issue of *SIGHT AND SOUND* about the accuracy of some of the historical information. Since its verification is generally beyond the scope of this reviewer, in an area where so many first-hand witnesses disagree, it will be more politic to confine comment here to other matters.

Some indication of the book's tone and depth might be best given by examining points arising on one page of discussion about *Citizen Kane*. Higham points to evidence of the film's 'limitations' in the fact that Welles has not rounded out the portrait of Kane: he remains a 'dazzlingly illuminated cartoon figure'. It has seemed to most commentators that this was precisely Welles' intention, the core of his ironic comment on the futility of all efforts to 'probe' character by journalistic processes. The whole film might be said to be a dazzlingly illuminated tabloid cartoon whose only 'true' rounded story lies in the sledge which everyone ignores. After thirty years this hardly needs saying. Moreover, Mr. Higham, in his assessment of Rosebud's significance, also fails to mention

that it is, among other things, quite simply an emblem of lost love.

However, individual interpretations are the critic's prerogative. At least it is proper for the reviewer to object to impenetrable comparisons. Those very snow scenes when Charles is separated from his parents, we learn, have 'all the concentrated frosty nostalgia of a *New Yorker* poem or winter short story'. Or, in contrast to the prevailing limitation—of caricature—Agnes Moorehead is brought to life, it appears, 'as vividly as any crofter in *Man of Aran*'.

In describing the opening sequence Higham reminds us of the chain of images in which 'great flowers of iron' change 'in a very gradual, almost Sternbergian dissolve' to the initial K. That 'almost' saves a lot of explanation. In case anyone should ask what a Sternbergian dissolve might be, Higham can always say this is only almost one. A dozen lines later we note that we are made aware 'almost subliminally' of a single lit window in the castle. Do we notice it or don't we notice it? The point of such language is to obscure distinctions and not clarify them. A critical look at one of the cinema's most concentrated intelligences demands more than this sloppy attention.

Citizen Kane is Chapter Two. The book continues in the same vein. This concentration on Higham's language is not idle. He uses it as a conscious instrument, both emotional and analytical, and through it, alas, we have to judge the quality of his perceptions: 'Impatient as we may be with the deficiencies of *Macbeth*, the deep flaws of *Othello*, the slackening energy in *Chimes at*

Midnight, yet we cannot deny their creator the final accolade, the acknowledgment that in images of darkness, of sun and bitter cold, he has made Shakespeare live again and flourish in the twentieth century's most potent medium of art.'

It is hard to find even in this book a paragraph which so unhappily combines pomposity, complacency and meaninglessness. I am referring to qualities in the writing rather than in the writer, of whom I have no knowledge. But faced with this level of attack it is, sad to say, difficult to find the energy to bother with any of Higham's critical extrapolations, some of which are perfectly acceptable. It is surely right, as he says, that Welles is obsessed with death and dissolution, with the misapplication of great energy and passion, with the ambivalent appeal of luxury, with the twin lures of corruption and innocence. But these are the commonplaces of Welles criticism and the insights and the power of expression that would relate them usefully to detailed studies of the films are lacking here.

This is partly because Higham doesn't seem to know enough about how films are made, so that when he looks, he looks carelessly. How else can we account for this sentence: 'The trial [in *The Lady from Shanghai*] is a masterpiece of cutting so complex that a whole chapter could be dedicated to it alone (some images last only a few seconds on the screen).' What sort of understanding of its complexity does Higham have if he does not know that a few seconds on the screen is a comparatively long time? There is, for example,

a shot of Hank Quinlan's hat and eye in *Touch of Evil* that is only four frames long and is so placed that it cannot be consciously seen. Four frames represents a sixth of a second of screen time. Again, Mr. Higham tells us that Tanya's last line from the same film, her ironical envoi to the dead Quinlan, is 'He was some kind of a man. What more can you say about people? Adios!' What she says, of course, if memory serves, is 'What does it matter what you say about people?' A rather different conclusion.

And speaking of envois, Mr. Higham's envoi to Welles is breathtakingly self-important and patronising. He pictures the elusive Welles as a minotaur whom he, Higham, has intrepidly pursued and finally tracked down. 'And now at last, I think I see the minotaur clearly, bellowing in his lair, his eyes full of distress.' Welles' genius deserves less impertinent personification and a more perceptive sympathy. In detail and in grand design this study fails to provide it.

GAVIN MILLAR

GOING STEADY

By Pauline Kael
TEMPLE SMITH, £2.40

CONFESSIONS OF A CULTIST

By Andrew Sarris
SIMON AND SCHUSTER, New York,
\$8.95

SAINT CINEMA

By Herman G. Weinberg
DBS PUBLICATIONS, New York,
\$8.95

Reviewing Pauline Kael's last collection in *SIGHT AND SOUND*, Philip French suggested that it was possibly just as well for British critics that publishers weren't yet luring them towards over-exposure of their columns in hard covers. But from America the collected columns come marching on, Miss Kael going steadiest of all. Her new book, following hard upon *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*, is all recent work: 36 *New Yorker* pieces (from *China is Near to If...*) wrapped around a long article written for *Harper's*, 'Trash, Art and the Movies'.

'Trash, Art, etc.' is a variation on an old Kael theme: movies as 'the sullen art of displaced persons', the unauthorised, unrespected art, in the days before the schools and the cultists and the pundits got hold of them. Better, of course, good trash than bad art; better the casual, unconsidered, subversive insights of movies that were never too seriously watched or intended than the solemn posturings of films trying to haul themselves towards art by their bootstraps. It also depends somewhat, of course, on what happens to be your particular definition both of good trash and of bad art. I don't think Miss Kael's instinct is necessarily infallible in either direction; but as usual when she's good she's very, very good, and when she's bad she's... opinionated.

The *New Yorker* has certainly alleviated some of the perils of

Pauline. Her writing seems more fluent, if by no means less sharp, and she has abandoned the rather schoolmarmish ploy of berating her fellow-critics. Structurally, she is still an uncertain writer: reviews tend to ramble, working their way towards logical conclusions and then plunging on past them. But she says in her introduction that she thinks this book is 'in some ways the best writing that I've done'; and she's probably right. Always readable; occasionally brilliant.

Andrew Sarris shows to least advantage in his introduction. 'I have very mixed feelings about all the slights I have suffered and all the furores I have caused,' he writes. 'In 1963 I rose from obscurity to notoriety... Even so, I was treated as a relatively unique phenomenon, however invidious to the cultural establishment.' The picture of the notorious and much-slighted Mr. Sarris soldiering on, bloody but unbowed, after another fracas with Miss Kael, suggests a painfully embattled, humourless and over-defensive writer. I don't know why he surfaces in the introduction, because, in his recent writing particularly, Sarris is so much better than that.

The book covers pieces written from 1955 to 1969, mainly for the *Village Voice*, and part of its interest is in watching a critic learn his trade the hard, effective way, by practice. Early Sarris tends to be didactic, restrictive, and occasionally jaw-breaking. 'This is the transcendent meaning of Rossellini's visual conception of a unified cosmos, undivided by the conceptual detail of montage,' he was writing in 1961. I don't believe that the Sarris of 1971 would pass that sentence. The writing has sharpened; the perceptions and sympathies widened. Now that he no longer sees himself as a kind of lone rider carrying the *auteur* theory across the great plains of midcult, Sarris has relaxed into style. As a blow by blow record of the cinema of the 1960s, *Confessions of a Cultist* stands up extremely well.

Herman Weinberg belongs to another generation and another manner. The first piece in *Saint Cinema*, about the players in Dreyer's *Jeanne d'Arc*, was written in 1929, by a 21-year-old and very exclamatory Weinberg. And in 1970 it is still an exclamatory Weinberg who is lamenting the screen's present 'corruption', as evidenced by *Satyricon*, *The Damned* and *Zabriskie Point*. Fritz Lang calls Weinberg the Boswell of the cinema. By temperament, he is an anecdotist and enthusiast, enveloping admired directors and films in great and occasionally sloppy bear-hugs, a Boswell perhaps always in search of his Johnson. For Weinberg, as his title suggests, there is something celebratory about the cinema; though probably he feels that some of his kind of sainthood departed for ever with the end of the Viennese school and the last of the vons.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

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Letters

It's All True

SIR,—I have read with interest Richard Wilson's alternative account of the making of Welles' lost Latin American film *It's All True*, written to correct my own version in your Spring issue.

Unfortunately, nearly all of the facts contained in my own article were supplied to me, either in taped interview or in the form of press releases and other materials, by Richard Wilson himself. He would have himself to blame if it were not for the fact that all the information he gave me was most carefully checked with the newspapers and magazines of the time. His reason for providing a new version, and chastising me for following the information which formed the basis of the old, is, apparently, that he is annoyed by my suggestions of Welles' profligacy as a film-maker. The suggestions are entirely figments of his imagination, since my references to the extravagance of Welles' vision were only flattering. This hypersensitivity of Welles' admirers is characteristic: a recent contributor to the *New York Times* near-illibellously accused me of jeopardising Welles' chances of employment by publishing a book on him!

Of those facts which Mr. Wilson did not supply me with: Harold Wellman was on location with *It's All True*; the numbers of airliners etc. on the mission are available from the records of the Inter-American Affairs Committee and from contemporary newspapers; the particulars of Welles' negotiations with Flaherty are drawn from Arthur Calder-Marshall's more accurate account in his biography *The Innocent Eye*; Nelson Rockefeller's previous involvement with Welles' career was determined by me in correspondence with the protagonists, including Mr. Rockefeller himself; Welles was in fact pressured into going to Brazil by the Rockefeller faction; Welles in fact abandoned *My Friend Bonito* and destroyed it by irresponsibly withdrawing its director; the commissioning of a full score by Paul Misraki is contained in a Mercury press release possessed by Richard Wilson himself. As for the 'myth' of the death of Jacare during an octopus-shark fight, Wilson's account is based on the evidence of only one person, assistant Leo Reisler, whereas my own is based on the evidence of the surviving members of the Jangadeiros, fully interviewed (though not by Wilson) in the Rio newspapers, and of other eye-witnesses.

I shall not fatigue your readers by listing the innumerable distortions and false assertions in Richard

Wilson's new article, nor his scrambled memories and accounts of the facts. I have gone thus far only to show that over-protectiveness of Welles has driven this writer (in common with others) to assume an attack where it does not exist and to provide hagiographic accounts when the truth is more touchingly evident of human weakness. Fortunately, Welles' genius remains unruined by his drawbacks of character and by the trivial arguments of his supporters.

Yours faithfully,
Los Angeles. CHARLES HIGHAM

DEAR PATIENT EDITORS,—Well, to the above rebuttal the best rebuttal is my original article. Since you can't reprint it, and I can't optimistically rely on anyone re-reading it... for those totally in the dark and wishing a little light:

I felt qualified to write the article because I was on the scene—and in the middle—24 hours a day. Charles wasn't, his informants weren't, and reporters of the news stories which Charles so carefully checked for verification certainly were not. I wanted to write the article because I've been able to see, retrospectively, how pivotal and crippling this project was to Welles' career; and how, at this late date, some of the facts and much of the tone of Mr. Higham's article have perpetuated a damaging myth about this man of unique talent.

Charles gratuitously and vividly makes my point for me by freshly formulating for his above reply an absolutely false conclusion: 'Welles in fact abandoned *My Friend Bonito* and destroyed it by irresponsibly withdrawing its director.' Speaking of responsible sources, how could this be anything but the personal interpretation of some aggrieved third party? Merely pronouncing it like a curse cannot make it true; but, unhappily, does feed the myth.

Finally, I would like to assure S & S readers that, over and above being on the scene, with many indelible memories, the pertinent files (scripts, correspondence, budgets, requests for funds, personnel and travel lists) are in my possession. I went through them all, and painstakingly, before I sent the article on. The only things I skimmed or skipped were what I knew to be historically unreliable: newspaper reportage and (particularly!) our own press releases issued through and by the studio. I'm sorry Charles seems to have chosen these above other testimony. —RICHARD WILSON

Westerns

SIR,—I am preparing a thesis on the Western, and I should be pleased to hear from any reader with knowledge of annual production figures of Westerns from their earliest times until the present day.

Yours faithfully,
W. J. G. PIDGEON
The Slade School of Fine Art,
University College London,
Gower Street,
London, W.C.1.

JANUARY

Date	Club	Time	Programme
Mon 4/1	NCC	7.00	Action
	NCC	9.00	Futz
Tues 5/1	NCC	7.00	Flesh
	NCC	9.00	They Call Us Misfits
Thurs 7/1	ICA	7.00	L'Atalante
	ICA	9.00	La Règle du Jeu
Mon 11/1	NCC	7.00	Hells Angels on Wheels
	NCC	9.00	Action
Tues 12/1	NCC	7.00	Acts of Love
	NCC	9.00	Me and My Brother
Thurs 14/1	ICA	7.00	Diary of a Chambermaid (Buñuel)
	ICA	9.00	Nazarin
Mon 18/1	NCC	7.00	Action
	NCC	9.00	Danish Blue
Tues 19/1	NCC	7.00	The Tragic Diary of Zero, The Fool
	NCC	9.00	Times For
Thurs 21/1	ICA	7.00	Breathless
	ICA	9.00	Alphaville
Mon 25/1	NCC	7.00	Necropolis
	NCC	9.00	Action
Tues 26/1	NCC	7.00	Robert Having his Nipple Pierced
	NCC	9.00	American Student Prize-Winners (1)
Thurs 28/1	ICA	7.00	Battleship Potemkin
		9.00	Alexander Nevsky

FEBRUARY

Mon 1/2	NCC	7.00	Action
	NCC	9.00	Hells Angels on Wheels
Tues 2/2	NCC	7.00	Me and My Brother
	NCC	9.00	Diary of a Shinjuku Thief
Thurs 4/2	ICA	7.00	Balthazar
	ICA	9.00	Mouchette
Mon 8/2	NCC	7.00	Danish Blue
	NCC	9.00	Action
Tues 9/2	NCC	7.00	The Keeler Affair
	NCC	9.00	Bike Boy
Thurs 11/2	ICA	7.00	Jules et Jim
	ICA	9.00	Baisers Volés
Mon 15/2	NCC	7.00	Action
	NCC	9.00	Futz
Tues 16/2	NCC	7.00	Times For
	NCC	9.00	Sympathy for the Devil
Thurs 18/2	ICA	7.00	Sunset Boulevard
	ICA	9.00	Some Like It Hot
Mon 22/2	NCC	7.00	Acts of Love
	NCC	9.00	Action
Tues 23/2	NCC	7.00	They Call Us Misfits
	NCC	9.00	Le Révélateur
Thurs 25/2	ICA	7.00	Ivan The Terrible, Part 1
	ICA	9.00	Ivan The Terrible, Part 2

MARCH

Mon 1/3	NCC	7.00	Action
	NCC	9.00	Rocky Road to Dublin
Tues 2/3	NCC	7.00	Times For
	NCC	9.00	Me and My Brother
Thurs 4/3	ICA	7.00	The Seventh Seal
	ICA	9.00	Wild Strawberries
Mon 8/3	NCC	7.00	Lonesome Cowboys
	NCC	9.00	Action
Tues 9/3	NCC	7.00	Diary of a Shinjuku Thief
	NCC	9.00	American Student Prize-Winners (2)
Thurs 11/3	ICA	7.00	Kanal
	ICA	9.00	Ashes and Diamonds
Mon 15/3	NCC	7.00	Action
	NCC	9.00	Flesh
Tues 16/3	NCC	7.00	Hells Angels on Wheels
	NCC	9.00	Robert Having His Nipple Pierced
Thurs 18/3	ICA	7.00	Pather Panchali
	ICA	9.00	World of Apu
Mon 22/3	NCC	7.00	Acts of Love
	NCC	9.00	Action
Tues 23/3	NCC	7.00	Danish Blue
	NCC	9.00	Necropolis
Thurs 25/3	ICA	7.00	On the Waterfront
	ICA	9.00	Viva Zapata
Mon 29/3	NCC	7.00	Action
	NCC	9.00	The Tragic Diary of Zero, The Fool
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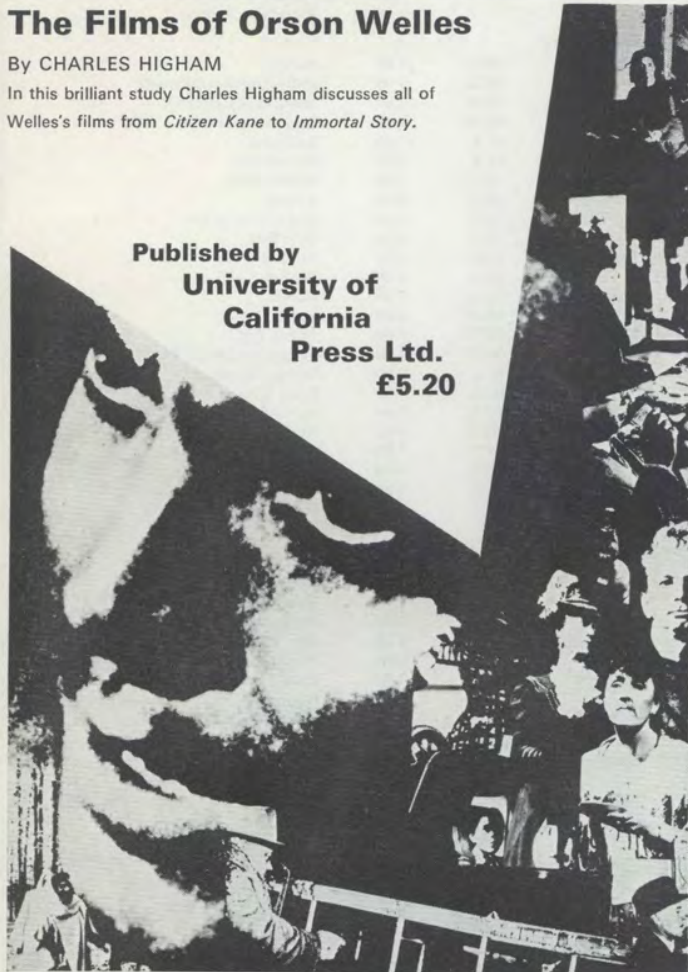
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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

DON DANIELS is a member of the Department of English at Arizona State University... BRENDA DAVIES has been in charge of the Information Department of the British Film Institute since 1955... PAUL JOANNIDES is a postgraduate research student working for a PhD in Art History at Trinity College, Cambridge. He has previously published articles on films in *Cinema*... GEOFFREY NOWELL-SMITH lectures in Italian at Sussex University, and is the author of a book on Luchino Visconti in the *Cinema One* series... PETER OHLIN teaches literature and film at McGill University, Montreal. Is currently spending a sabbatical year in Sweden, his native country, working on a book about the conceptual and aesthetic strategies of some contemporary film-makers... BEVERLY WALKER is an American, a southerner by birth. Was for several years an actress, later worked at Lincoln Center, New York, and was associated for some time with the New York Film Festival. Has worked as a film publicist on *Accident*, *Elvira Madigan*, *Bonnie and Clyde*, and other films and festivals; recently with Antonioni on *Zabriskie Point*... MIKE WALLINGTON is a Cambridge graduate and editor of *Cinema* magazine.

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ROLAND LETHM for *Les Souffrances d'un Oeuf Meurtri*.
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Films of special interest to *SIGHT AND SOUND* readers are denoted by one, two, three or four stars.

****AVEU, L' (Warner Bros.)**
Another political exposé from Costa-Gavras, this time of the 1952 show trials in Czechoslovakia as seen by one of the defendants. Less opportunistic than *Z*, but doubts remain about the journalistic methods. (Yves Montand, Simone Signoret, Gabriele Ferzetti.) *Reviewed.*

****BALLAD OF CABLE HOGUE, THE (Warner Bros.)**
After the rigours of *The Wild Bunch*, Peckinpah relaxes with a strange, rollicking comedy-Western which returns to the offbeat religious ground of *Guns in the Afternoon* with its tale of a man who defies God in his quest for revenge. (Jason Robards, Stella Stevens, David Warner.) *Reviewed.*

BODY, THE (MGM-EMI)
Human biology lesson with a didactic sociological, celebratory emphasis: sequences of birth, copulation, senility, work on a car assembly line, camera voyages into the digestive tract, and some hortatory comments from Vanessa Redgrave. Total effect a bit disconcerting, like a civics lecture in a nudist camp. (Director, Roy Battersby.)

***DIRTY DINGUS MAGEE (MGM-EMI)**
Sinatra as disreputable Dingus pursuing the loot in his underwear, George Kennedy as a disreputable sheriff pursuing him, and Anne Jackson as a very reputable Madam pursuing the sheriff. Typical Burt Kennedy, but surprisingly witty.

****ENFANT SAUVAGE, L' (United Artists)**
Based on reports of a nineteenth-century doctor determined to civilise a boy who has grown up wild and isolated in the forest, Truffaut's new film—with superb black and white photography by Nestor Almendros—patiently chronicles the boy's progress in a loving and humorous celebration of the capacity for affection and communication that separates man from lesser animals. Truffaut himself plays the doctor; Jean-Pierre Cargol is magnificent as the wild child. *Reviewed.*

****FIGURES IN A LANDSCAPE (Cinema Center/Fox)**
Losey's film from the Barry England novel about two men on the run through an unknown country. The landscape (and the pursuing helicopter) is stunning; the figures, though, seem a little out of drawing. (Robert Shaw, Malcolm McDowell.) *Reviewed.*

I AM AN ELEPHANT, MADAME (Academy/Connoisseur)
Schoolboy revolt in Bremen in a German version of *If...* Stage director Peter Zadek gets in a few telling digs at German attitudes and the education system that produces them, but the idea is better than its execution and the interest mainly parochial. (Wolfgang Schneider, Günther Lüders, Heinz Baumann.)

I START COUNTING (United Artists)
Slightly added suspense story, about a schoolgirl's suspicion that her adored adopted brother is the local sex murderer. David Greene's direction remains cool, with a lot of emphasis on his favourite white-

on-white colour schemes, while the script keeps rather feverishly shifting its ground. (Jenny Agutter, Bryan Marshall.)

****LIBERATION OF L. B. JONES, THE (Columbia)**
The old racist roundabout in the Deep South with a thin veneer of current cynicism (the traditional liberal mouthpiece turns out to be a bigot, the victim is Black Powerish). Worth seeing for Wyler's cool, mathematical direction and Roscoe Lee Browne's performance. (Lee J. Cobb, Anthony Zerbe.)

****LOOT (British Lion)**
Despite the loss of some of the more outrageous lines, Joe Orton's black comedy successfully translates to the screen, with splendidly hammed performances and apocalyptically garish suburban settings held together by Silvio Narizzano's intelligent direction. (Richard Attenborough, Lee Remick.)

***LOVE AND ANGER (Miracle)**
Four sketches from an original quintet (Bellocchio's contribution is missing) of variations on a vaguely biblical theme, including Godard's *Prodigal Son*. Didactic fables from individualist directors make only for discord, and the dubbing is ruinous. (Directors: Carlo Lizzani, Bernardo Bertolucci, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Jean-Luc Godard.)

****MARRIED COUPLE, A (Contemporary)**
A compendium of incidents in the daily existence of a Canadian advertising executive and his family, constructed by Allan King with every evidence of being genuine but with an inevitable sense of contrivance lurking not too far away. As compelling a portrait of the storms and summers of the married state as one could encounter on the screen or anywhere else. (Billy Edwards, Antoinette Edwards, Bogart Edwards.)

***MARRY ME! MARRY ME! (Gala)**
Claude Berri's *Mazel Tov*, a gentle satire on Jewish marriage, with the groom putting off the wedding to chase after a grand passion, then deciding that home comforts and a handsome dowry are best after all. Quietly, observantly funny. (Claude Berri, Elizabeth Wiener, Grégoire Aslan.)

MASTER OF THE ISLANDS (United Artists)
Another instalment of *Hawaii*, covering the coming of the pineapple to the deposition of the monarchy. Fair old hokum, complete with fire, pestilence and hordes of Chinese immigrants, directed as well as possible by Tom Gries. (Charlton Heston, Tina Chen, Geraldine Chaplin.)

MOSQUITO SQUADRON (United Artists)
Ludicrous return to World War II, stiff upper lips, and low-level bombing attacks to destroy German rocket installations. Hero faced with awful problem: he loves best friend's wife, and if he carries out mission as ordered, best friend will die... (David McCallum, Suzanne Neve; director, Boris Sagal.)

****ONE FINE DAY (Academy/Connoisseur)**
Ermanno Olmi scrutinises the special torments of big business and finds his ageing countrymen as vulnerable as they were in *Il Posto*, if no longer so amusing. Technically his most adventurous film so far, and his personal favourite, beautifully combining lush camera movements and almost subliminal editing to show the emotional disintegration of a grizzled tycoon after a road accident. (Brunetto del Vita, Lidia Fuortes, Vitaliano Damiani.)

****PRIVATE LIFE OF SHERLOCK HOLMES, THE (United Artists)**
Billy Wilder's ingenious, if rather thinly plotted, exposé of the great man's alleged weaknesses. Some

nice grimy jokes and a handsome design job by Trauner, complementing an elusive delight in the ambiguities of the legend. (Robert Stephens, Colin Blakely, Geneviève Page.) *Reviewed.*

****RAILWAY CHILDREN, THE (MGM-EMI)**
Lionel Jeffries' engaging debut as director—a properly Victorian adaptation of E. Nesbit's classic, with the children's adventures with the railway at the bottom of their garden nicely set off by period details and individual character comedy. (Dinah Sheridan, Bernard Cribbins, Jenny Agutter.) *Reviewed.*

RIDER ON THE RAIN (Avco Embassy)
Mismanaged René Clément thriller about the reverberations of a girl's nightmare involvement with a maniac rapist. Familiar suspense mechanics generate little suspense and less conviction. (Marlene Jobert, Charles Bronson.)

RISE AND RISE OF MICHAEL RIMMER, THE (Warner Bros.)
Disorganised satire on politics, polls and popular misrepresentation as a business efficiency expert works his way up the political ladder by means mostly foul. A hotchpotch of familiar television faces and familiar television jokes, some bang on target, more of them sadly misfiring. (Peter Cook, Denholm Elliott, Ronald Fraser; director, Kevin Billington.)

***SANJURO (Academy/Connoisseur)**
Preposterously late but welcome arrival of the 1962 sequel to *Yojimbo*, with Mifune again playing the indigent, itinerant samurai and helping a beleaguered household through a clan battle. One of Kurosawa's brightest and most vigorous adventures. (Tatsuya Nakadai.)

SCROOGE (Fox)
Cheerless musical version of Dickens' *Christmas Carol*. Albert Finney makes the most of the old miser, but cramped sets and unimaginative direction don't give the numbers (Leslie Bricusse) much chance—and they certainly need it. (Alec Guinness, Edith Evans; director, Ronald Neame.)

SEVERED HEAD, A (Columbia)
Sluggish and self-conscious adaptation of Iris Murdoch's novel, which had already suffered by being rewritten as a hit play. Formal *ronde* junketings among London's intelligentsia reduced to unconfident light comedy. Claire Bloom good as execrable love object. (Ian Holm, Richard Attenborough; director, Dick Clement.)

***THERE WAS A CROOKED MAN (Warner Bros.)**
Henry Fonda as the reformist governor of an Arizona desert prison up against Kirk Douglas, as the most devious and ruthless of the inmates. Callous comedy-drama, entertainingly played and quirkily written, but pretty facile and arbitrary in its ironies about dishonour among thieves. (Director, Joseph L. Mankiewicz.)

THREE SISTERS (British Lion)
Laurence Olivier's stagebound record of the National Theatre production: solid, respectable, and very dull. One or two quite watchable performances (Joan Plowright, Ronald Pickup) muffled in a theatrical vacuum. (Jeanne Watts, Louise Purnell, Alan Bates.)

***TORA! TORA! TORA! (Fox)**
With two Japanese directing the Japanese sections, this two-language co-production about the Pearl Harbour air strike loses in stylistic unity what it gains in impartiality, with responsibility for the disaster attributed more to inexorable fate than to either of the nations involved. Smaller ironies are nicely handled and the raid itself is superbly choreographed. (Martin Balsam, Jason Robards, Soh Yamamura; director Richard Fleischer.)

****TRISTANA (Academy/Connoisseur)**
Another docile Buñuel innocent is impassively corrupted by her elders, pruned by amputation both physical and emotional, and abandoned in her turn to the solitary furies of old age. The master treads familiar ground with a brilliant and icy precision, some indulgent moments of nightmare, and a picturesque (if politically pointed) reconstruction of Toledo in the 1930s. (Catherine Deneuve, Fernando Rey, Franco Nero.)

TROPIC OF CANCER (Paramount)
Pointless adaptation of Henry Miller's crudely 'poetic' novel about an American expatriate's search for sex and freedom in the Paris of the Thirties. Updated, it looks like nothing so much as a travelogue with prostitutes. (Rip Torn, David Bauer; director, Joseph Strick.)

TWO MULES FOR SISTER SARA (Rank)
Surprisingly routine Western, though with personable performances from Clint Eastwood as the lone ranger hired to help the Mexican Revolution, and Shirley MacLaine as the lady in the nun's habit who helps and hinders. (Manolo Fabregas; director, Don Siegel.)

****TWO OR THREE THINGS I KNOW ABOUT HER (Contemporary)**
A Parisian housewife resorting to occasional prostitution to maintain her standard of living provides the concrete basis for Godard's more abstract ideas about the impersonality of urban culture and the iniquities of capitalism. In his most successful attempt at Brechtian film-making he dislocates sounds, words and images, investigating the nature of language, communication and, of course, film. (Marina Vlady.)

***WANDA (Academy/Connoisseur)**
Stunning writer-director debut by actress Barbara Loden, who appears as a sad-sack lady extensively used and misused by a succession of hardly more capable men. Funny, sad, and defiantly uninterested in arousing easy sympathy. But unvarnished truth for once pays off. (Michael Higgins.) *Reviewed.*

WATERLOO (Columbia)
International battle-piece, with the Red Army refighting Waterloo on the playing fields of the Ukraine, Rod Steiger as a doomed, introverted Napoleon and Christopher Plummer an intelligent but slightly tinny Iron Duke. Spectacular resources in military hardware; imaginatively, though, it's a bit of a plodder. (Director, Sergei Bondarchuk.)

WHAT DO YOU SAY TO A NAKED LADY? (United Artists)
TV's Candid Camera blossoms in the cinema with sociological pretensions and a series of tiresomely arch set-up jokes (e.g. workers confronted with naked lady emerging from their office lift). (Director, Allen Funt.)

WOMAN IN CHAINS (Cinecenta)
Clouzot makes a disappointing return to film-making with this modish story of sexual kinks and kinetic art that falls lamely between suspense thriller and psychological drama. Laurent Terzieff is unconvincing as the deviate photographer, and the rest of the cast seem to share his embarrassment. (Elizabeth Wiener, Bernard Fresson.)

YOU CAN'T WIN 'EM ALL (Columbia)
Tony Curtis and Charles Bronson in amiable form as a couple of wisecracking, double-crossing mercenaries hunting for loot while the Ottoman Empire (1922 vintage) crumbles around their ears. Direction and script make them two-time losers. (Michèle Mercier; director, Peter Collinson.)

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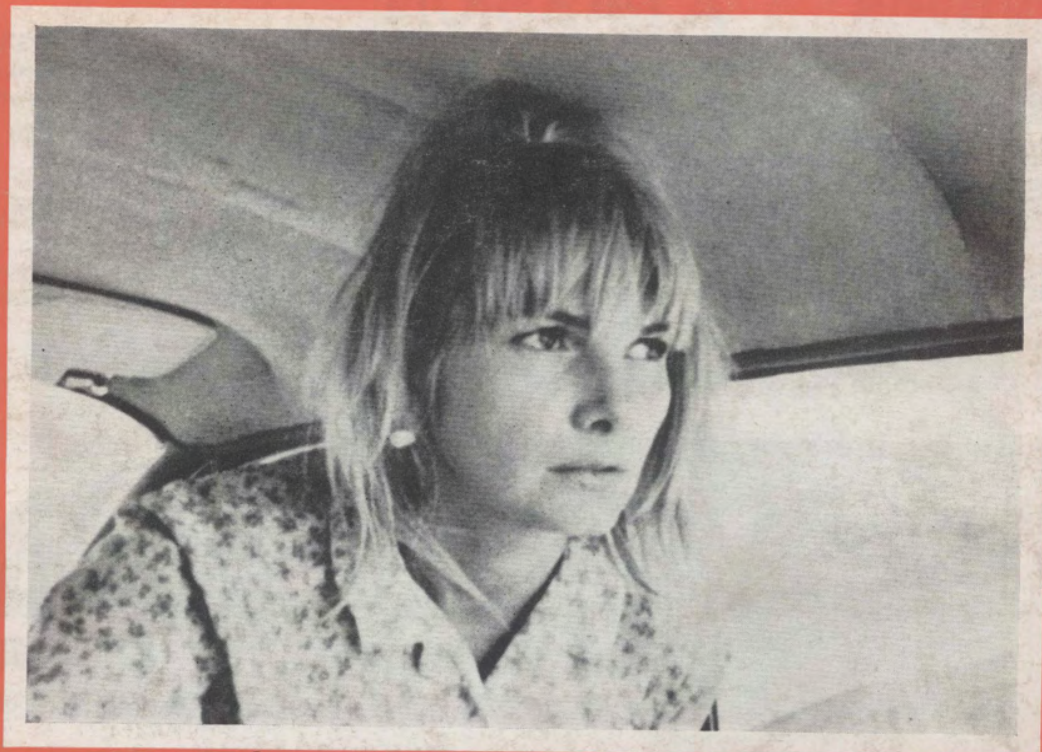
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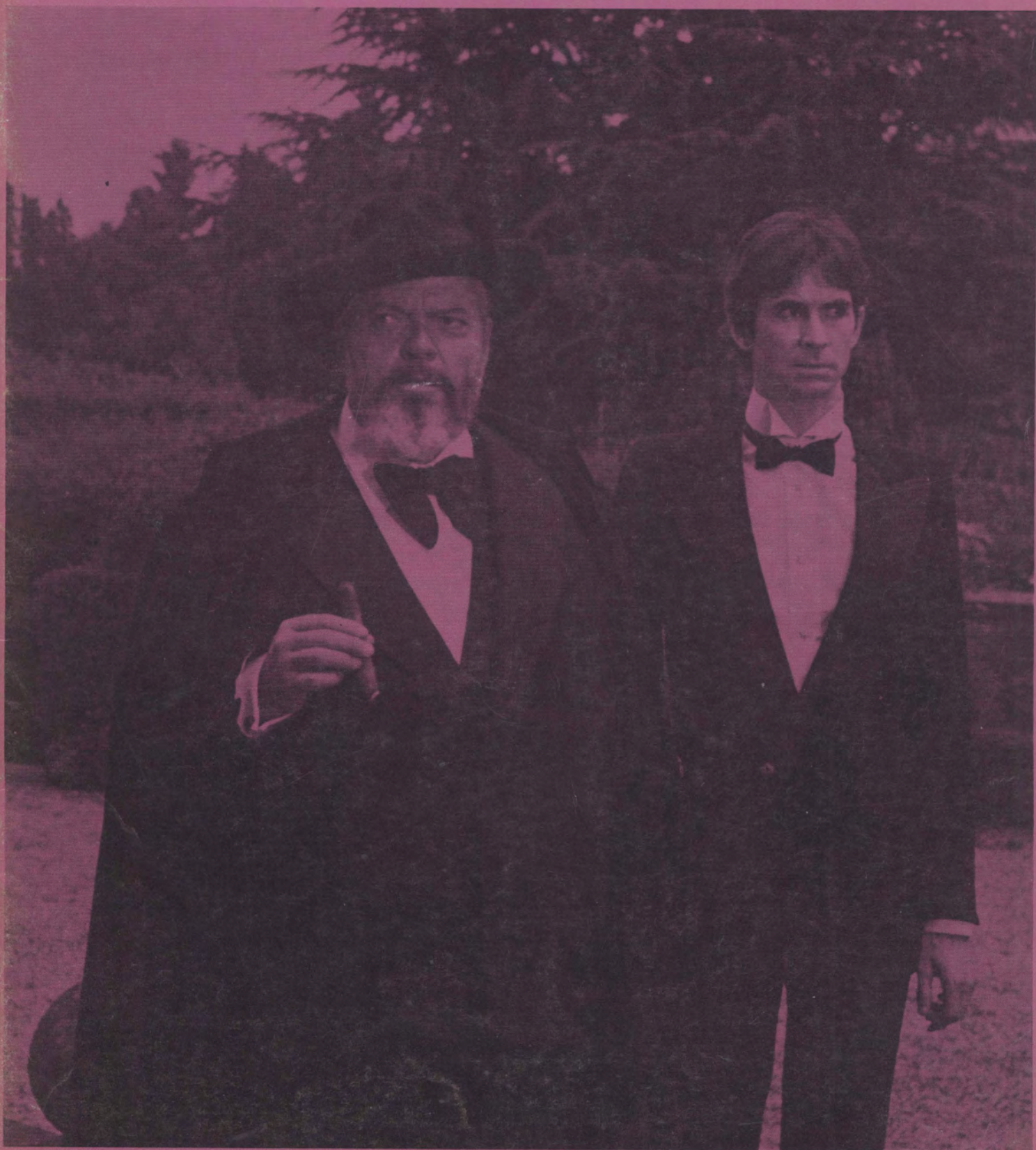
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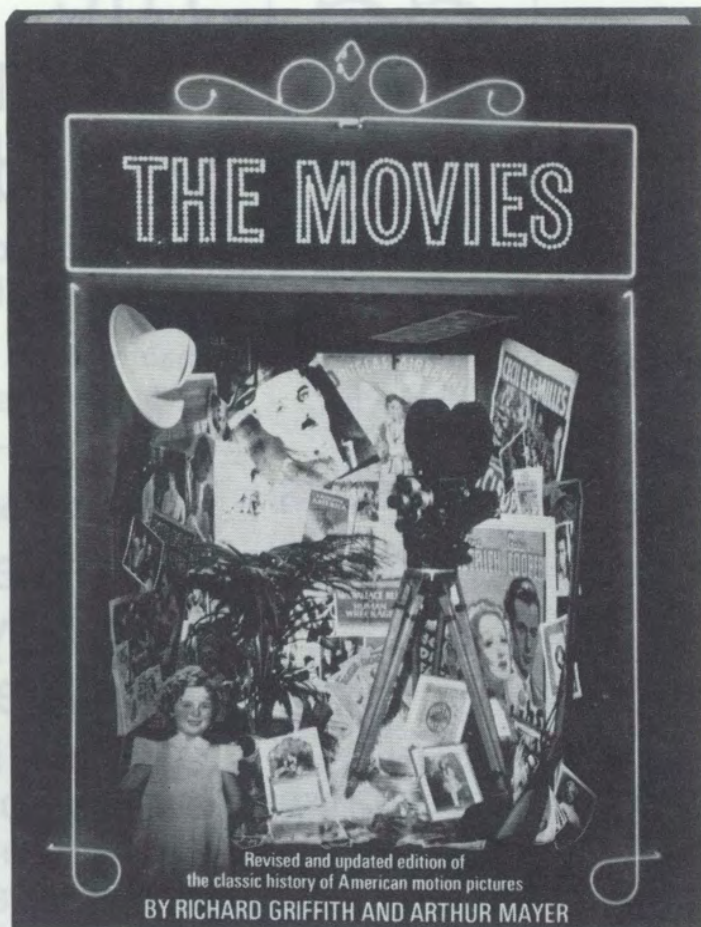
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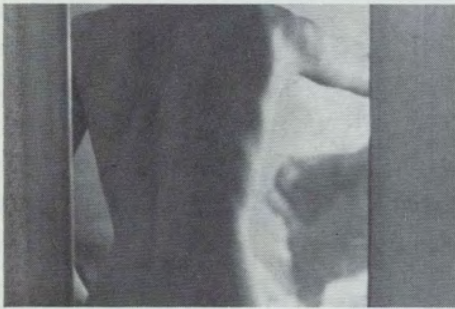
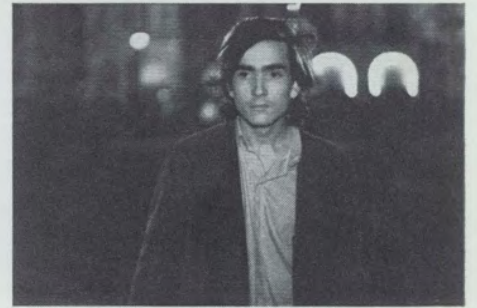
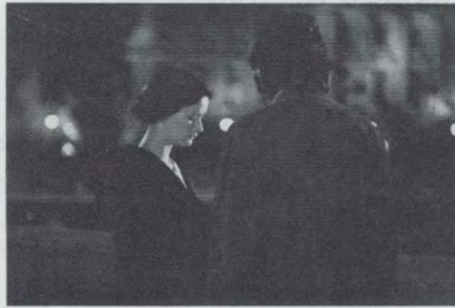
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On the cover: Orson Welles and Anthony Perkins in Chabrol's 'La Décade Prodigieuse'

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FOUR NIGHTS OF A



DREAMER

Carlos Clarens

Because it is noticeably less stark and sombre than any Bresson picture to date, *Four Nights of a Dreamer* is headed for a low place in the director's canon, and seems likely to be written off as a lesser work by one of the screen's very few practitioners of tragedy; a light rendition of a heavier, if less than classic, Dostoevsky novella. The latest Bresson is also less overtly mystical; less preoccupied with grace, divine or human, that is, than such uncompromising works as *Pickpocket* and *Mouchette*; less strict and formal than *Le Procès de Jeanne d'Arc*, to some critics the peak film that summed up and defined the director's style. There is no denying that, in France at least, Bresson has suffered a critical decline since then. His recent Dostoevsky adaptations—*A Gentle Creature* (1969) and now this updated version of *The White Nights*—appear by contrast to the earlier films more flexible if no less controlled, perhaps due to the introduction of colour which, regardless how muted or discreetly employed, still tends to act upon one's reflexes; or the choice of performers, especially female, more attractive and less morose than is customary with Bresson; or the films' setting in a modern urban landscape, complete with intrusions from the world of television, the theatre and even non-Bressonian cinema, which renders them more accessible if scarcely less *hors temps*.

Yet, precisely by adapting the familiar Bresson language to the telling of a Dostoevsky narrative, by readjusting the author's themes to those of the director, the film sheds profuse light on the Bresson method. Bresson takes the characters of the story—the girl who waits on the bridge for her lover, the lonely young man who befriends her and finally falls in love with her, the lover who returns at the end to claim the girl—and places them in familiar Parisian territory, amid the traffic and bustle of the Pont Neuf at night. The setting seems at first one of the least likely for a Bresson picture, its contemporaneity so difficult to abstract. But Bresson's style remains lean and spare as ever. *Four Nights* enjoys no more a geographical site than did *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne*, where every extraneous detail, including the furniture, was pared away.

Throughout the film, an impression of milling traffic is mostly conveyed by a slightly distorted soundtrack, or an occasional dark form traversing the field of vision to blot out Marthe and Jacques from our view; a sort of punctuation subsidiary to the more formal 'chapter headings' that parcel the chronology of the tale. Steadily, the camera preserves the direction of every stare, without distractions or detours (and, consequently, without zoom shots or camera movement other than the most functional tracking); and hardly a shot is introduced without an establishing look from the characters to set up a spatial relationship between observer and object: a police car that stops nearby as Marthe stands precariously poised on the outer side of the balustrade, a sightseeing *bateau mouche* that sails under the bridge, Marthe's lover glimpsed in a crowd at the end of the film. In fact, we see only what Marthe and Jacques see, and we hear them distinctly, almost removed from their context, with traffic as a mere low obligato, and the post-synch adding to the sense of isolation.

Then, the protagonists are free to pursue their obsessions, sometimes jointly when they happen to coincide, their lives flowing

briefly together in pursuit of the dream. Jacques (Guillaume des Forêts) is a lonely painter who pours his fantasies into a tape-recorder, every girl briefly seen and followed in the street becoming a dreamlike *vis-à-vis* on tape. Deftly, Bresson solves with this one prop the problem of the internal monologue and/or the omniscient narrator. Marthe (Isabelle Weingarten) pursues in turn her obsession of faithfulness to the student who once lodged at her mother's apartment and with whom she fell in love sight unseen, through the wall as it were, through the sound of his footsteps, the books he lent to her mother, or his voice coming from behind the door of the lift cage; none of which is to be found in Dostoevsky but all of which reinforces the Bressonian concept of contiguity, of people struggling to make contact across impassable barriers of their own creation.

Like Fontaine and Joss in *Un Condamné à Mort s'est Echappé*, the priest and the old noblewoman in *Journal d'un Curé de Campagne*, or the brief season of marital bliss in *A Gentle Creature*, Marthe and Jacques travel together, inevitably not for long. 'Give me your hand and I will see you to your home,' says Jacques formally to Marthe on their first night on the bridge, just a moment after we have seen his hand catch hold of her arm to prevent her suicide, in one of the film's telling close-ups. The cinema of Bresson is full of such gestures: they signal more than just an establishing of physical contact and seem imbued with extreme spiritual strain. One remembers the intricate hand-play in *Pickpocket*, the almost imperceptible brushing of hands between the shy lovers in *Au Hasard*, *Balthazar*. By contrast, *The Go-Between* and *Le Souffle au Coeur* seem almost primitive in this respect, and a film wherein a young child first discovers sexual passion through a fleeting look or a barely discernible gesture still remains to be made.

A gestural cinema cannot help being an erotic cinema, and there is an erotic side to Bresson which is rarely discussed although

richly annotated by the films themselves. *Mouchette* comes most readily to mind. This most relentless of films contains a deeply liberating moment in which the viewer is given a sense of the heroine's still undefined pleasure at being followed about by a young stranger, who even engages her in an exhilarating bump-car skirmish at a fairground attraction. In fact, an undisputed sexual content is to be found already in Agnès' top-hatted gear and dance in the much earlier *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne*, and it extends noticeably to the love scene in the parked car in *Balthazar*, and suffuses most of Dominique Sanda's scenes in *A Gentle Creature*. In *Four Nights of a Dreamer*, Bresson intercuts a sustained shot of the nude lovers in an almost primal bodyhold with shots of the mother fussing about outside the locked door, and there is even an overlay of the mother's voice over the entire scene. This is most deliberate, I think, and rather than infuse a spurious suspense into the scene, it underlines the precariousness of such scenes in the Bresson context, the all too rare moments of physical/spiritual contact that manage to seep through the wall of isolation. Bresson's female archetype—the vulnerable child-woman victimised by the system or established convention—remains irrecoverable to the end: Joan, *Mouchette* and the enigmatic, wounded 'gentle creature' go to their deaths without renouncing some personal vision.

The characters played by Anne Wiazemsky in *Balthazar* and Nicole Ladmiral in *Journal d'un Curé de Campagne* staunchly refuse salvation because it entails submissiveness. In his 1957 adaptation of *The White Nights*, Visconti delivers his hysterical heroine into the hands of the long-awaited lover, who becomes in the final shots no less than the death-figure of the Romantics. When Bresson allows Marthe to disappear down the Boulevard Saint-Germain on the arm of her regained lover, a myopically unromantic scholar, he is no less unflinchingly consigning her to her dream, the stuff that Jacques' own dream will be made of, the fantasy on the tape. Call it a happy ending if you wish.

Since the days when André Bazin established a metaphysical system for the Bresson films in the early 1950s, many critical theories have been put forward to account for the unique power of the deceptively simple Bresson method of film-making. They have been mostly amalgams of shoddy humanism, literary flight of fancy and pictorial or religious parallel. Now, Jean-Pierre Oudart, in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, has come up with an infelicitous term, *suture*, smacking more of surgery than of grammar, and an argument rather too abstrusely stated for *l'homme moyen culturel* (drawing as it does on large doses of Barthes and Greimas), but nevertheless establishing a structural system hinging on the relationship between field of vision (the screen) and field of viewer (an actual or potential reverse shot), and the resulting shift of value in the image from *sign* to *signifier*, between what the image *is* and what the image *acquires* by being contiguous to another (possibly non-existing) image of our own creation, thus reducing the role of voyeur in the spectator, and charging the nearly neutral image with all our subjective experience. Perhaps we

haven't come that long a way since the Kuleshov experience, but it is advisable to watch the boat/bubble/call to adventure/image in *Four Nights of a Dreamer*.

Bresson is not an easy man to interview, reserving, like all great directors, the right to a final cut. His candour in conversation is more than tempered by his wary delicacy when confronted with the written word. Many anecdotes have disappeared from the following interview: they involved technicians or directors who could possibly feel attacked—needless to say, unintentionally. I hope M. Bresson will forgive me for introducing as a passing comment the story of how he came to a parting of the ways with his cameraman, L. H. Burel (*Journal d'un Curé de Campagne, Un Condamné à Mort s'est Echappé*), after finishing *Le Procès de Jeanne d'Arc*. Burel had such vivid memories of Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc* that he could not reconcile them with Bresson's even more austere view of the character. It seems to me that there is no doubt Dreyer's Maid is a saint and that the film is iconographical; despite Falconetti's realistic performance, she still wears her martyrdom like a crown. Bresson's Joan, on the other hand, goes to the stake unswervingly, following her compulsion, at the end of which there might be God.

You first turned to Dostoevsky for *A Gentle Creature* and returned to him for *White Nights*, which you called *Four Nights of a Dreamer*. Why?

ROBERT BRESSON: It was partly because of lack of time. Let me add that I would never dare to adapt the novels (*The Idiot*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, *Crime and Punishment*, etc.), which are formally perfect and complete in themselves. The two Dostoevsky stories from which I made my films are rather skimpy, but perfect for my purpose. And naturally there is always a solidity, an accuracy in Dostoevsky which permits reasonable adaptation in a comparatively short time. For *Four Nights of a Dreamer*, a sum of money was suddenly made available to me and I welcomed the chance to make a new film. At that time I was putting down on paper another project, but it still needed a whole year's work before shooting could start. I remembered then reading *White Nights* a long time ago. I immediately went back to it. In both *A Gentle Creature* and *Four Nights* I try to avoid a simple rendering. Although the films keep to the plots of Dostoevsky, I try to communicate impressions that are mine and part of my own experience.

These last two films, the Dostoevsky adaptations, seem so much more secular than your other recent films; than, for instance, *Mouchette*.

It's true that in *Mouchette* there was a musical motif of Monteverdi's Magnificat introduced at the beginning and at the end of the narrative that seemed clearly to indicate the mystical aspect. But Jacques, the hero of *Four Nights*, is so wary of the conventional world that this very mistrust becomes an almost mystical view of man. You will find it all in Dostoevsky. I invented nothing.

Yet the character emerges as pure Bresson, even to the stoop-shouldered gait which is the mark of all your heroes.

Je fais mon miel comme je peux. As for the mystical aspect of *A Gentle Creature*, there is the crucifix which appears twice in the film: the heroine at first rejects it as a useless object, only to recognise its symbolic meaning later on, when she takes her own life.

There is another aspect to *Four Nights* which is not in Dostoevsky, and that is the erotic.

Nowadays, films can show almost everything. I preferred a vertical couple standing nude and motionless, holding each other close, to the eternal scene of lovers tossing about horizontally. Also, the sense of their stillness is reinforced by the awareness of the mother moving about in the hall. I believe in the value of concentration in this respect as in every other.

And then there is a third aspect to *Four Nights*, the obsessive side, the idea of love being stronger than the love-object itself, which must have attracted you to the story. Yet it was your idea to have Marthe fall in love with the young lodger through the wall, without ever having set eyes on him.

And, of course, when they finally meet, disappointment is out of the question. This is the Dostoevsky notion of the dream overpowering reality. Also, the hero is a dreamer, a solitary young man who builds elaborate fantasies on the flimsiest realities. I thought the best way to convey his imaginary world was through the use of a tape-recorder.

Isn't that another instance of the Bresson rule that, whenever possible, sound should replace the image?

Yes, since the ear is more easily directed towards the inside, the eye towards the outside. You know how much I am for the 'inside', which I strongly believe to be the true vocation of the cinema, as opposed to theatre which remains, whatever they may say, exterior and decorative.

Would you say something about the films-within-the-film and the play-within-the-film, which are not to be found in Dostoevsky?

In *Four Nights* I profited from the chance to poke fun at a certain kind of movie: it's just a mockery of passion and romanticism, of blood and violence. I also thought that all that exaggeration would contrast with the restraint of my character, which is not really restraint but simply a refusal to indulge in theatrics. When I think that the non-acting in my films is regarded by some people as unreal and unnatural! The excerpt from *Benjamin* that you see in *A Gentle Creature*, as well as the Elysée Paramount cinema where we shot some scenes, was placed at my disposal by Mag Bodard and Paramount, respectively producer and distributor of both films. But I thought the clip would also serve a more definite purpose. It is a film that audiences accept as somewhat libidinous, and the heroine of *A Gentle Creature*, not unexpectedly, is groped by the man sitting at her side during the screening.

Also, in *A Gentle Creature*, the Hamlet performance functions variously: it introduces the notion of death and suicide both to the heroine and the viewer; then, it demonstrates that nowadays actors on stage are capable of 'splitting the ears' of an audience, against Hamlet's advice to the players 'not to overstep the modesty of

nature'. I know some people have found such a performance of *Hamlet* old-fashioned; I assure you that there is not, after all, much difference between it and current styles of play-acting. Right after the show, when the young woman in my film finds herself back at home, she reads the text of the scene to her husband, pretending that she attaches more importance to the Shakespeare tragedy than to her own. From the viewpoint of story construction, it serves further to disunite the couple.

You used to select your non-actors according to a moral rather than a physical resemblance to the characters as they exist in your mind.

In the past, this method consumed a good deal of my time. Today, I go much faster. I rather trust my instinct and believe in luck and random chance. I realise that the characters we imagine are too constructed, too consistent, while reality presents us with a great deal of contradiction and inconsistency, which are not at all perceptible to the eye but which the camera, our extraordinary instrument, will grasp gradually while shooting. In *Four Nights*, there was less time than usual to select the 'interpreters'. They were recommended to me by friends. They had no acting experience or ambition, but instead a literary or university background. Guillaume des Forêts, who plays Jacques, was a student of astrophysics and the son of a well-known writer. Isabelle, who plays Marthe, is the daughter of the playwright Roman Weingarten. She worked as a model.

Like Dominique Sanda, the heroine of *A Gentle Creature*. But don't you think that modelling is, in a way, a sort of play-acting, and that these two girls are considerably more expressive than the usual non-actress?

In Sanda's case, I knew that she would be right from the moment I spoke to her on the telephone. It was her voice which convinced me, and I simply confirmed the choice when we met the following day. As for the way in which she looked at her husband at certain moments of the film, that look which you say bespeaks all her feelings . . . well, it was nothing but a blank. This goes with the flatness of the image, so that I can express myself not through the miming of the interpreters, which is often an interference, but through the inter-relation of the images. Images, for me, exist only as signs, the sense of one modifying the next. I'm not after rupture; I'm after simultaneity which is intrinsic to the film. An image must be flat if it is to gain its value when it joins the others.

Would your paintings have the same degree of concentration as your film images?

The eye must be directed and told where to look for meaning, in paintings as in films. I like the people in my films to look at each other. I like to isolate each player and each look, and concentrate on it. A look is an unspoken word. I believe Proust said something like that.

You know my films have always seemed to me . . . how could I say it? . . . attempts, trials . . . The language of images is still so unknown, so new, so difficult to practise. ■

National Film School



Colin Young

NFS unit on location. Photo by Graham Berry

Some people wonder if we are mad. Unemployment figures in film and television are up; investment figures are down. Film education is already turning out graduates who can't find work. Is this any time to start a new film school?

It made sense to start film schools after World War II in the new socialist states which wished to rebuild their industries under national ownership. These schools did what they were supposed to—refashioned their country's cinema. The schools' effect can be measured, for graduation was almost the only way into the profession. In Hollywood to collect the Oscar for *Shop on the High Street*, Jan Kadar took the time to look back and regret that he chose to work as a grand master's assistant in 1947, rather than go to the new school starting up in Prague, which, he said, did far more than simply reproduce the old cinema.

Last November the Prague School celebrated its 25th anniversary. The Polish School at Lodz is the same age. Not so long ago in California, Alexander Groshev, Rector of the Soviet School VGIK, presented us all with pins celebrating their 50th birthday. There was no mandate like this after the war in the English-speaking countries. Canada, until recently, has relied exclusively on the National Film Board of Canada but, also until recently, has had no success in producing features. The Quebecois, as a direct consequence of their ties with France, had the earliest successes. Donald Shebib, whose *Goin' Down the Road* was named best Canadian film last year, was UCLA trained.

There are now 300 American colleges and universities doing something with film. About seventy of them give degrees. This all grew like Topsy—nobody asked it to, except the students. No industry request, no national policy. It just happened because young people wanted to make movies and put pressure on their colleges to make it

happen. The older schools (USC, UCLA and New York University) between them can now account for between one and two thousand students at any one time. The investment is extraordinary. UCLA's plant for theatre, film and television cost about \$7 million to build and equip. A new programme at Temple (in Philadelphia) is reputed to have cost \$5 million. Film and television are being democratised—no one pretends that thousands of jobs exist in the profession, but knowledge of media is no longer the privileged possession of a small number of very highly trained professionals. Taking advantage of simply operated 'sub-professional' equipment (half-inch video and Super 8mm. film), some schools are now reorganising their teaching assumptions away from studios and large complex hardware. One model being constructed at Rice University (in Houston) is deliberately aimed at students in other fields who do not expect to become film professionals, but who want to acquire the language of film for their own

work. Under carefully controlled conditions, useful films can be turned out by these students in a few months.

Elsewhere, outside the universities, there is an explosion of interest in tape as a medium. The extraordinary Raindance Corporation in New York, through their periodical *Radical Software*, spreads information and encouragement to the new generation of media freaks who think of themselves as creating an alternative communications system to the one run by the networks. George Stoney, after a time running the Film Board's Challenge for Change programme in Montreal, is now working out of New York University and has a community project in which half-inch video equipment is used to produce shows which are fed into the city's cable television system. This capability spreads to the ghettos and the Appalachian mountains.

Because of its resources, and its large, demanding population, and the widespread access of its young people to university and college training, the United States is experimenting all the time in new uses of film and tape. In much of this activity you can detect the sense of fighting back against the big producers and the commercial uses of media which was always an aspect of the

Britain's new National Film School opened in autumn 1971 at Beaconsfield Film Studios. Colin Young, Director of the School, is a Scot and was previously Professor and Chairman of UCLA's department of Theatre Arts.



National Film School unit working on 'The First Movie'. Photo: Graham Berry

early underground film movement. Now it has far more interesting implications—on the surface these are social and even political, but not very far beneath there are a number of interesting aesthetic problems as well. Some of these are raised by the possibility of two-way television, where audiences become programmers by having access to cameras and microphones, or are given the right to edit or otherwise supervise the film or programme which is made about them. The old ideas about documentary and fiction become totally blurred, as they are anyway by the ordinary workings of commercial television in the States. People line up around projects involving film and tape, and use media as catalytic agents promoting social change; they ignore the debate about propaganda and consensus television.

The new tools are not the prerogative of any one group, or any one political viewpoint—some programmes, like *Challenge for Change*, try to make them available universally. Thus is created a clear distinction between this type of 'democratising process', for which many college programmes have been unwitting precursors, and thoroughly professional training, which in the United States is offered by very few courses*.

Until Jennie Lee appointed the Lloyd Committee in 1965 to look into the need for a national film school in Great Britain, it looked as if Britain was following the same pattern as the United States by locating its film courses in general institutions. Pioneering programmes like those at the London School of Film Technique (now the London Film School—and still operating without a subsidy), the Royal College of Art, the Regent Street Polytechnic (now the Polytechnic of Central London), Bristol University and the Slade School of Art (University College, London) were being joined by smaller courses round the country at colleges of art and design, drama schools, universities and polytechnics—a lot of this assisted into being by the Education Department and other branches of the BFI.

*Graduates of U.S. film schools include: Francis Ford Coppola, Monte Hellman, Douglas Trumbull (UCLA), Michael Wadleigh (NYU), George Lucas and Irvin Kershner (USC).

The National Film School has been asked to concentrate on the training of cameramen, writers, directors and producers—people who, if they are good enough to work professionally, could create employment opportunities for others rather than be looking for work as someone else's employees.

There is no reason to repeat what most of the other courses are doing already. Most are working within an educational structure which identifies them as undergraduate courses. It follows that if the new School is not to duplicate their efforts, it must work at the post-graduate level. This is not the same as requiring a first degree for admission; it was always part of the plan that the School would be open to talented applicants without regard to their formal educational level. But with an annual intake of about 25 (rising to 50)† students, most of whom will be British, it is clear that the competition for entry will be severe and that there will be considerable advantage given to those who have managed to gain access to equipment elsewhere or who have already committed themselves by getting into the industry as apprentices or research assistants in the normal way, probably as an alternative to going to college or university. In fact the first batch of students at the School includes both types.

It should also be obvious that in a country like Britain entry into the profession cannot all be channelled through this one training scheme. The School will provide professional training for a limited number.

Its work will not and cannot occur in a vacuum. Both Government and the Industry are directly involved: Government, because it gives an annual grant to the School through the Department of Education and Science, and Industry, because it must be consulted (through the Cinematograph Films Council) before money from the so-called Eady levy can be issued as a grant to the School. This financing partnership defines the authority of the School, even though the School functions auto-

†Since it is a 3-year course, the total population in residence could ultimately be 150.

nomously through its Board of Governors. For the flow of financing to continue, the School has to satisfy the Government of the day that public money is being used wisely, and satisfy the Industry representatives of the day that British film stands to gain from the project.

In this sense, it remains a national project and must stay responsive in some sense to national and professional concerns. Griereson's documentary group were more obviously called to public service, and they produced their best work in the course of accepting his challenge to bring Britain alive to its people. Doctors and engineers who are put through their training with public money no doubt think that the issue of public service is not raised at all. One of the most remarkable things about this new project is how little encumbrance has been placed upon it to be this or that to any particular pressure group. This freedom is to be celebrated and appreciated, but it is just as easy to argue that the real task of the School is in fact to do something for the hands that feed it and not to take support for granted.

The internal workings of the School would probably only interest other people engaged in film training, and the time to discuss our methods is when we think we have accomplished something. We intend to work as much as possible as an operating studio, with general training at first, and then gradually build on the special competence of each person. After the first year small production companies will be formed within the structure of the School and each company will undertake a programme of pictures designed to stretch or otherwise develop existing talents. These companies might shift around after the second year until the talents are compatible, and the intention will be to sustain direct contacts with professionals throughout the process, both by making strategic appointments to the staff and by encouraging close dialogue with outside professionals who are willing to team with their opposite numbers in the School. We have to create a step in the continuum. As Tony Garnett suggested the other night, not a line-up of *teachers* and *students*, or even *professionals* and *students*, but people making films at different levels squaring off with each other and reacting to each other's work. The less formal all this is, and the closer it is to the realities of creative work, the better it will be for the School and for the profession.

It is worth looking for a moment at the kind of profession they are preparing to enter. In the September 1971 issue of *Film Finance* (the quarterly journal of the Guild of Film Production Accountants and Financial Administrators) Paul Fletcher makes a familiar but crucial point. 'Throughout the sixties most of the outstanding British films . . . resulted from American enterprise and initiative . . . In the mid-sixties the total volume of production in monetary terms of the British . . . film industry was about £25 million a year, of which about £20 million came from American sources.' His guess is that the corresponding 1971 figures would be 'At about an annual level of £15 million overall, with about £4 million from British sources and £11 million from American . . .' He goes on to say that no one can pretend to be

happy with the reduction of financial strength in the British sector, but equally importantly to argue that it is not only a fresh investment of funds that is needed but a change in attitudes and practices. Since he is writing about the National Film Finance Corporation's new lending policies and its bid to establish a Finance Consortium, the practices and attitudes he is referring to are those connected with financing and distribution arrangements which, he and his colleagues have argued, make film investment too costly and too risky.

He then describes briefly the plan to have the NFFC guaranteed against loss by the British Film Fund which, as he indicates, is already investing in the future of the British industry by allocating £235,000 annually to the Children's Film Foundation and now £100,000 annually to the National Film School, out of the £4 million annually which accrues to the fund from the levy on box-office receipts. (A smaller grant is also now made to the BFI Production Board.)

These three or four dependencies on the Fund were conceived individually and worked out over a period of years. Taken together they would look very much like a rational policy—an industry planning for and protecting its future out of its income. It takes very little imagination to consider that some of the senior or graduating students of the School might aspire to work on or even produce films for the Children's Film Foundation, and might wish to look to the NFFC as at least partial investor in their early professional work.

To the extent that Film School graduates want to work in features, they must first be trained to make films within small budget limits, taking advantage of technological developments but not exploiting



Beaconsfield Studio. Photo: Ben Lewin

labour. The young French directors of the sixties knew they had to recoup in France, Switzerland, Belgium and Italy. Satyajit Ray knew he had to recoup in Bengal. The curse hanging over the British film-maker is that his language is also used in North America, and his audience is being swamped with American products which set the standards of chic and the levels of cultural and intellectual content. To deal with that competition, and to encourage the distributors and exhibitors to find you an audience, you have



Unit for 'The First Movie' filming at Penn. Photo: Graham Berry

to know the market and how to aim your picture at your proper share of that market. And you have to be good, or you won't be asked back.

A question I have kept on asking, since returning from California, is what the break-even point should be on a modest budget picture hoping to recoup its production costs in Great Britain (and perhaps Australia, New Zealand, etc.). But this is like asking how long is a piece of string. There are too many variables—the question is useful for defining these variables. A film can lose its potential audience by appearing too cheap. A minority audience picture can be too expensive for its possible share of the market. It matters little if the initial production costs of a picture can eventually be covered through 16mm. distribution if the banks are still charging interest on the outstanding balance of the debt. Nothing stands still. Heraclitus is the god of film.

Nevertheless, despite the ambiguities involved in giving a figure, the magic number of £100,000 is often mentioned (oddly enough, the equivalent figure, of \$250,000, is often quoted in the States). In the same issue of *Film Finance*, Tony Garnett shows how difficult this figure is to reach when shooting with conventional methods. A first budget for six weeks shooting on location using 35mm. comes out at over £130,000. Recalculating for Super 16mm., and assuming a saving in shooting time as a result, the budget comes down to just over the magic figure. About half the reduction comes from saving a week, the other half from savings in stock and laboratory costs. The incentive to keep costs down in this way would be to have a greater freedom in choice of subjects than otherwise would be possible.

The British cinema has to hope it also turns out film-makers who can work in a world market, and here their use of the English language is a distinct advantage. Polanski and Forman finally moved into English. Like their colleagues from the Polish and Czech schools, the films they

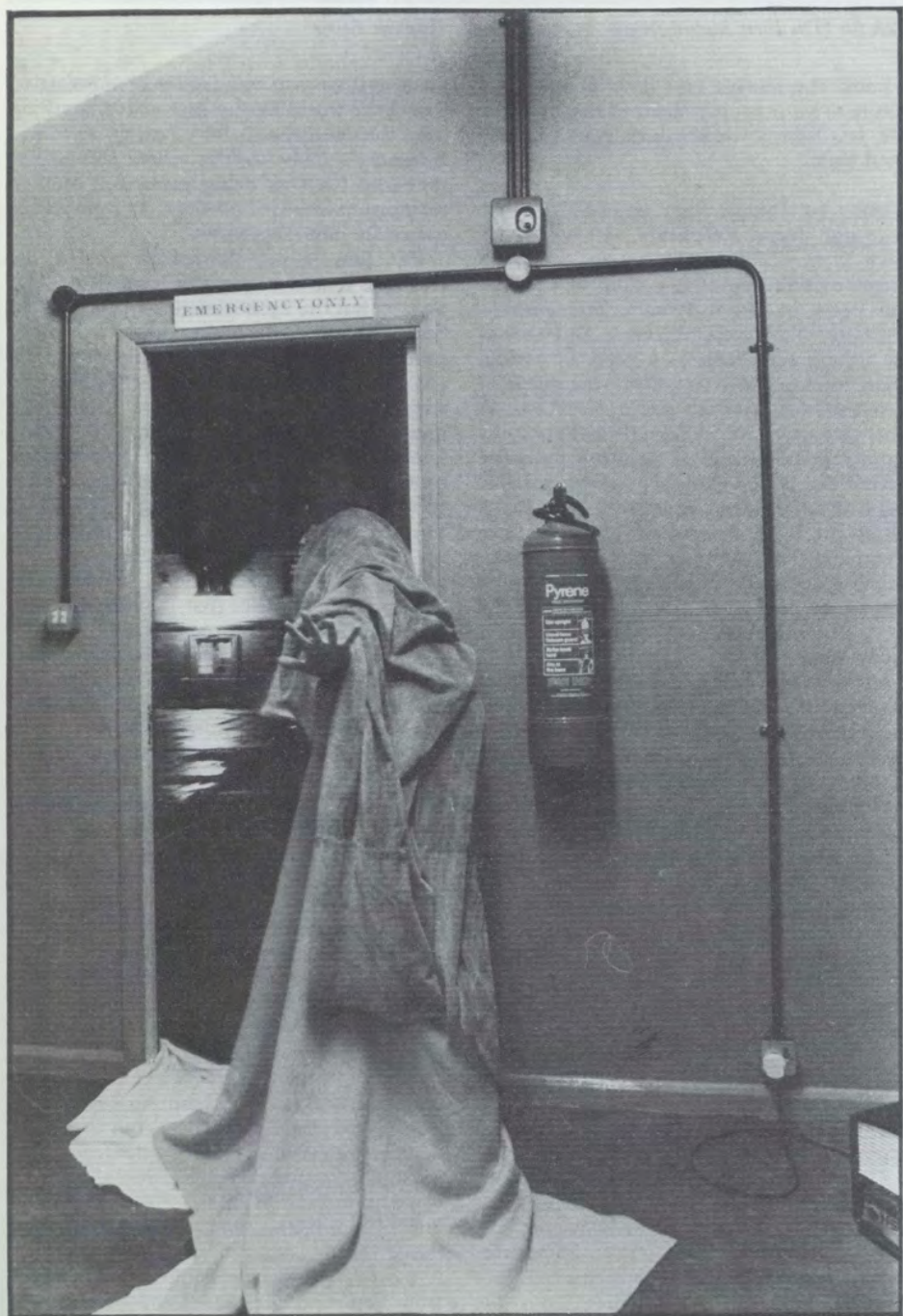
made in their own language were appreciated round the world but never reached anything like the audiences for *Taking Off* and *Rosemary's Baby*. A film school should not type-cast itself as being interested only in turning out localised product. This translates too easily into 'B pictures'.

But film is not limited to use in the cinemas. I do not have the equivalent U.K. figures, but the 1970 statistics for the United States might indicate a pattern. Feature production there was up slightly over 1969 with an increase in domestic production which was quite dramatic (27%), although many studios reported heavy operating losses. Television prime-time series episodes on film were down, but 16mm. syndication continued to grow. There were an estimated 115,000 non-theatrical titles produced—95% of which were on 16mm. (up from 89% in 1968). One of the major laboratories in Hollywood concludes that the film industry 'Will go through more and greater changes in the next ten years than in the last twenty' and that 'the total volume of film consumption will steadily increase . . . (but) will be used in patterns quite different from today's.'

Thus the School must act as more than a training company for future professionals. It has the chance to be a laboratory for the rehearsal of solutions to the problems facing the industry, and for finding new ways to reach audiences and provide services. This can only be done with the collaboration of practising professionals who will help to create flexible production methods.

Unfortunately the television companies and the cinema industry divide people into categories—current affairs, news, short subjects, drama, public relations. The freedom of movement available to artists in other media (music, painting, sculpture, literature) is hard to set up administratively—there is certainly no artistic reason for maintaining the divisions. Some few can work in and out of film and theatre, in and out of television film, cinema and commercials; but largely by retaining freelance status. Few find it possible to move freely from fiction to non-fiction and back again.

The School may be building a fool's



One of the first NFS films, so far untitled. Photo: Dennis Lowe

paradise, but it will encourage movement of that kind, both as a training discipline and a way of subjecting work done in one form to the rigours and values of the other. Perhaps the best conversation I have had about television (in one of the independent companies) since coming back to Britain came close to being bogged down in arguments between drama and documentary directors who, by and large, hated each other's work. The documentaries were too 'dull', the dramas were 'unbelievable'. The conversation went beyond that to suggest that each genre defined the limits in which the other must work. Both could be failing and at the same time could be causing problems for the other.

We continue to act as if media were hard-edged. Film and tape are administered as separate media. We used to reject or laugh at films which switched from black and white to colour or which combined animation and live action. We were told that CinemaScope had killed montage, which it hadn't, and overlooked the real gains which could come from playing down the need for editing. We are talked out of changing the shape of the frame in a movie and told that the accidental shape of the frame produced for the Edison equipment was the stuff of real cinema. We are very primitive about the movies, and haul in theories from other fields without taking the time to let cinema develop its own requirements. Our language does not even have a word for what we do when we *watch* and *listen* to a movie—something that would combine 'audience' with 'spectator'. And our critics seem to be able to deal with cinema either in terms of its content or its formal properties, but very rarely with both at once.

What is needed is a dialogue between critics and film-makers which supports the work film-makers are trying to do. The School, by being in a way a monotechne, will have to import its critics and theorists. It is likely to have a very pragmatic series of criteria. Help is needed in clarifying the aesthetics of fiction and documentary (some of the reasons are clear from what has already been said), especially where these overlap. The connections between film and television need to be re-examined, both for reasons of economy, but also as a boost to the imagination. The work that social scientists are doing in cultural studies needs to be more firmly rooted in knowledge of how media operate, and film-makers need to know more about the results of such work.

Nobody knows necessarily where all this is leading. But out at Beaconsfield in the old studios occupied at one time by the Crown Film Unit and subsequently by Group 3 under John Grierson and John Baxter, where *This Sporting Life* was produced and Norman Wisdom and James Robertson Justice held sway, the first 25 students are already hard at work, under the signs that still say 'Central Office of Information Film Library' and 'Anvil Films'. The trade unions and various individuals and organisations representing management from film and television have all combined to create this School. The staff is thoroughly professional. The local pubs are happy to see us. It is an extraordinary act of faith. ■

THE MIRROR



MACHINE

George C. Stoney

Half-inch videotape rigs selling for about \$1500, first introduced to the U.S. market by Japanese manufacturers as expensive toys for the home movie buff, are having a profound effect on all types of non-theatrical film-making in New York. The other day two of us from New York University's Alternate Media Center making programmes for Cable Television met some (red) Indians in front of the Museum of Natural History, shot for an hour and looked at our 'answer print' on the subway going home. It was played back via the same 3 lb. camera and 18 lb. deck we used to record it. No lab work was needed; no synchronisation of picture and sound. We edited in the camera.

Had this been hot news we could have shown it on the air in minutes. We could have played it back on the spot, giving the Indians themselves the assurance that we were 'telling it like it is', a not inconsiderable advantage in these days of up-tight minorities. We could have erased it and recorded again, using the same \$16 roll of tape.

With a minimum of training the Indians could have made their own show, and a lot of people will be doing just that as cable TV with its multiple channel capability spreads across the country. Already there are cable systems operating in every major trading area, where some eight to ten million subscribers pay \$5 or \$6 a month so they can get interference-free reception of

up to a dozen TV channels snatched from the air by a cable company's tall community antennae. In many places they also get more old time movies, an automatic clock and weather report scanner which also carries public notices, and anything else the operator can get for little or no money that might please his subscribers and fill the several extra channels most systems provide.

We've come a long way since *Housing Problems*, that admirable British documentary made in the 1930s, gave a few slum dwellers a chance to speak for themselves despite the domination of a monster 35mm camera, a professional crew and a director fresh from the other side of town. Those of us who have spent the years between trying to find a simpler, less threatening way to introduce viewers to the viewed, even viewers to themselves, find these new little mirror machines heady stuff. We are willing to put up with limitations in editing capability, can accept the small screen size until a projection system is developed, and grow impatient with television engineers who tell us our half-inch tapes can never be relied on to produce a signal of professional quality and stability on the home set.

We reply, 'Maybe not . . . not yet . . .' shrugging away what may be major problems to be solved by the electronic engineers before every hamlet can have the same ready

access to what's happening a few miles away that they now have to what's happening in London, New York, or on the moon.

I first met videotape, the two-inch variety now standard in TV studios, back in the late 1950s, when the New York Screen Directors' Guild persuaded its members to come to classes by telling us 'this machine will make film obsolete in ten years time'. Well, Guild members are still shooting a lot of film, most of it to be *transferred* to videotape before broadcast. Despite all the advantages inherent in tape, manufacturers of professional equipment have never built systems that are truly portable. Even the smaller equipment using one-inch tape looks like, and must be operated like, the heavy, pedestal-bound electronic cameras that determined TV studio production styles three decades ago. It is as if the 1972 automobiles were still being designed as horseless carriages.

Union regulations and operating procedures have remained equally rigid. So the hand-held 16mm camera became the instrument of choice for all of us who wanted to get a little closer to reality with our documentaries for the small screen. This meant we were carrying 28 pounds of camera on our shoulders. We were tied by wire to a sound man who had his own burden of equipment to lug about. Between the 'take' and our answer print we had the lab, the sound transfer studio, and all the chores of synching, editing, negative cutting and more lab work which we had come to accept as inescapable parts of film-making. For too many of us these chores became the most important part of the job. We let them, and the professional attitudes and practices inherited from 35mm studio feature production, distance us from the people we were making films about. By and large, the people in front of the 16mm camera held by a documentary film-maker today have little more chance to express themselves honestly and freely than they did in the 30s when *Housing Problems* seemed such a breakthrough.

I first met half-inch videotape at the National Film Board of Canada in 1968, when I left the U.S. for a two-year stint as guest Executive Producer for *Challenge for Change*, a programme designed to use film as a catalyst in various social programmes to improve the lot of Indians, poor fishermen, mothers on welfare. John Kemeny, the programme's founder, and Colin Low, a brilliant film-maker and social philosopher long at the Board, had already done enough by the time I was on the scene to prove that, with care and patience and the right choice of film-makers plus the expenditure of a great deal of money, film could and did have a considerable effect 'as an agent for social change'. What was needed, obviously, was a faster, cheaper means to do the job if the technique was to be applied on a broad scale. Most important, we had to find some way for the people to take more of a hand in the film-making themselves.

The two women who persuaded us to launch our first community videotape project were no ordinary film-makers. Dorothy Henaut and Bonnie Klein brought to the task a philosophy about democratic participation that shaped every aspect of the work, from the way to run training classes to the



way editorial decisions are made. It is largely their concept, their way of working, which guides social animators, teachers and community leaders generally who are now applying *Challenge for Change* techniques across Canada.

The advantages of videotape for immediate playback to small groups were soon obvious to even the most resistant filmmaker at NFB; and most professional filmmakers are simply appalled at the whole idea of half-inch video. Nothing that easy to operate can possibly be of much worth. Distribution staff members were equally sceptical. 'Without a direct means of projection, what good is it for a larger audience?' they asked. It had taken them 30 years to make the 16mm. projector standard equipment in schools and village halls. Now we were asking them to begin an entirely new kind of distribution of an entirely new kind of reel that would require an entirely new kind of machine for playback. They were thinking in film terms, of course, not realising that the cheapness of tape made production for purely local use an affordable way to go. They were also denying the fact that the old way of distributing non-theatrical films for that larger audience had been made all but obsolete ten years before by the spread of TV.

Cable TV in Canada developed much more rapidly than in the U.S., largely because of geography and the distance between settlements. Many merchants put up community antennae because their customers couldn't get a decent signal unless this service was provided along with the set they bought. For a long time almost no one utilised the capacity these community antennae systems had for originating broadcasts themselves. But with some prodding by National Film Board representatives and local community leaders, a good many system owners were found willing to let their facilities be used by *Challenge for Change*. A series of community experiments was launched, using half-inch video as the basic tool, often augmented by 'live' programmes and film.

Today most of these community efforts are still modest ones, conducted by volunteers and backed by a National Film Board distribution field representative or a social animator paid by a university or government agency. The most successful have been in rural communities where difficulties of 'on air' reception often boost cable subscription to 80-90% of set owners, a not uncommon situation in many parts of North America. (Hilly West Virginia, the poorest state in the Union, is also the most heavily cabled, with over 60% of households subscribing.) Little money has come from the cable operators to support these efforts. They are so accustomed to filling their multiple channels with programmes pulled out of the air at no cost that they seem to regard free programming as a divine right.

A major effort to tap the cable operators' pockets for programme support was backed by the National Film Board in Thunder Bay, Ontario, two years ago when that community's cable licence was up for renewal by CRTC, Canada's regulatory body for broadcasting. 'Town Talk', a local organisation

of civic-minded people, wanted to take over the management of one cable channel, make programmes for it and be paid for their effort at the rate of one dollar a month per subscriber to be taken from the \$6 a month fee collected by the cable company.

The National Film Board spent a great deal of time and money to train the Town Talk people as film and videotape makers. They learned to edit their tapes up to one inch for more film-like cutting and greater stability of picture. In a surprisingly short time they were turning out programmes of professional quality without losing their local flavour. They won a large audience for their work throughout the viewing area. But they lost the battle. The cable company, strongly backed by their national association, fought the idea of giving up either control of programme content or the right to keep all the money it collected. The CRTC, despite considerable public pressure from all over Canada to set a different precedent for community cable use, sided with the industry.

The FCC, the American equivalent of Canada's CRTC, has been equally dominated by the broadcasting industry. In fact Cable TV itself has suffered as more and more arbitrary curbs are put on its community-serving potential by this agency. Now there is a strong possibility that engineers at the FCC will decide to make it illegal to put half-inch videotape on Cable, as it is now illegal to use half-inch on regular TV. The present half-inch systems deliver only 310 lines of information and the American 'on air' legal minimum is 525 lines. But when the signal is carried by cable the quality is already guaranteed. Most home sets can't deliver more than the 310 lines the Japanese have chosen as their standard in any case.

It is the word 'Japanese' in that last sentence that is the tip-off. Practically all half-inch equipment available in the U.S. is of Japanese manufacture. Even Ampex, the U.S. manufacturer which dominates the professional studio equipment field, has opted to distribute Japanese-made half-inch equipment instead of making its own. Now, if the Japanese start nudging the American makers of studio equipment with their home-type gadgets there could be trouble ahead. Far easier to block this with a simple government regulation saying 'no half-inch on Cable because it's sub-standard' than meet the competition of the market-place. And many a cable operator is ready to welcome such a decision as a way to avoid trouble without taking sides. As one of them remarked to me recently: 'What place has local politics got on an entertainment medium anyway? After all, we're guests in people's living rooms.'

This is not to say that every cable operator's office is being stormed by citizens hungry for access to the airways. Teleprompter, the nation's largest conglomerate with 212 franchises, is probably reflecting the dominant public mood in its current advertisements reading: CABLE TV—*The world's greatest football receiver.*

New York City is one of the few places in the U.S. where public access to Cable TV is a right, written into the 20-year agreements given to the two cable systems allowed to operate on Manhattan Island. Each has an exclusive franchise at present and the num-

Left: community camera: videotape in action

ber grows as rapidly as cable can be laid, for TV reception in this city of skyscrapers is renownedly capricious. Our Alternate Media Center in the School of the Arts at New York University is one of several makers of programmes now being shown. Funded by the Markle Foundation to be a centre for experiments in community programming, we have stuck to half-inch tape for the most part, feeling its price, its portability and its ease of operation make whatever we do with it replicable in many places that couldn't afford to operate with professional equipment.

Because channel accessibility is relatively easy, we have experimented with programming events on cable in 'real time'. For example, we telecast 33 hours of a community school weekend when teachers, parents, architects and social scientists worked for three days and nights to develop plans and strategies for an experimental school. We put on 18 hours of material made at a conference at the NYU Law School on the rights of minors, at which we recorded a running commentary on, and reactions to, the adult-dominated panels as seen by the kids themselves.

Normal TV could have done these programmes with remote hook-ups, but at a cost only such mass-approved spectacles as football games can attract advertisers to support. A brief summary is all most news editors would give them, quite enough for most viewers. But for people who would like to be present, or whom the event's sponsors would like to attract, such potted versions are no substitute. For such events we use the half-inch tape, simply bicycling it to the cable's control room on a two-hour delay.

We are also developing weekly tapes with and about people in selected neighbourhoods where there is a concentration of cable subscribers. Poor people subscribe to cable quite as readily as do the affluent, it would seem. For the price of two tickets to the movies down town you can see a choice of eight or ten movies every day of the month on your cable hook-up, and you don't have to 'get a baby-sitter or risk your life on the streets to get there', as cable operators have not hesitated to emphasise, playing up the paranoia most New Yorkers suffer from these days.

Interestingly enough, it is just this problem—the mistrust of one New Yorker for another—that has been the dominant social concern of most of our tapes to date. Our approach, as developed by Red Burns and Jackie Park, two Canadian women long resident in the U.S. but still imbued with that country's extraordinary respect for community, has been to record people's lives and concerns with relatively little stress on 'issues'.

'Video portraits' might be a good term to use for tapes our young film-makers come back with at first. Slowly they get to know their chosen neighbourhood. The people in it watch 'Channel C' on the cable and come to trust the film-makers for not manipulating the news for entertainment value. They gain self-respect as they keep seeing themselves and each other on a medium usually reserved for the famous or infamous. In time they come to speak more honestly, less defensively, about what concerns them most.

The remarkable thing is that the mere fact

of seeing on TV people whom you have lived near but not dared or bothered to know tends to reduce suspicion. An old Jewish gentleman who has been fearful of the Puerto Rican boys hanging out on the stoop can stop as he leaves the house and say, 'I saw you on TV last night'. Somehow these few words become a salutation and a compliment, taken as a friendly gesture by the receiver. A little thing, to be sure, but important in this city of invisible walls.

I have seen much the same technique at work in a remote mining town in Alberta and in the hills of Tennessee. New York is not the only place where such walls exist. This is a nation so dominated by commercial formula TV that 'live' entertainment, even good conversation, is often hard to find. A friend told me of a recent visit to his home town in the Middle West. Gone were the long summer evenings when grandparents, parents and children filled the front porches with songs, games and talk. Now, he said, the porches are deserted. The streets are quiet. Almost everyone is inside watching TV, each age group clustered around a different set, hypnotised by their own preferred brand of commercial entertainment. One more reason for all this effort we are making, then, is to see if TV can be turned into a stimulus for action as well as repose. Our goal is to get people involved, to get them to turn off their sets and join the living.

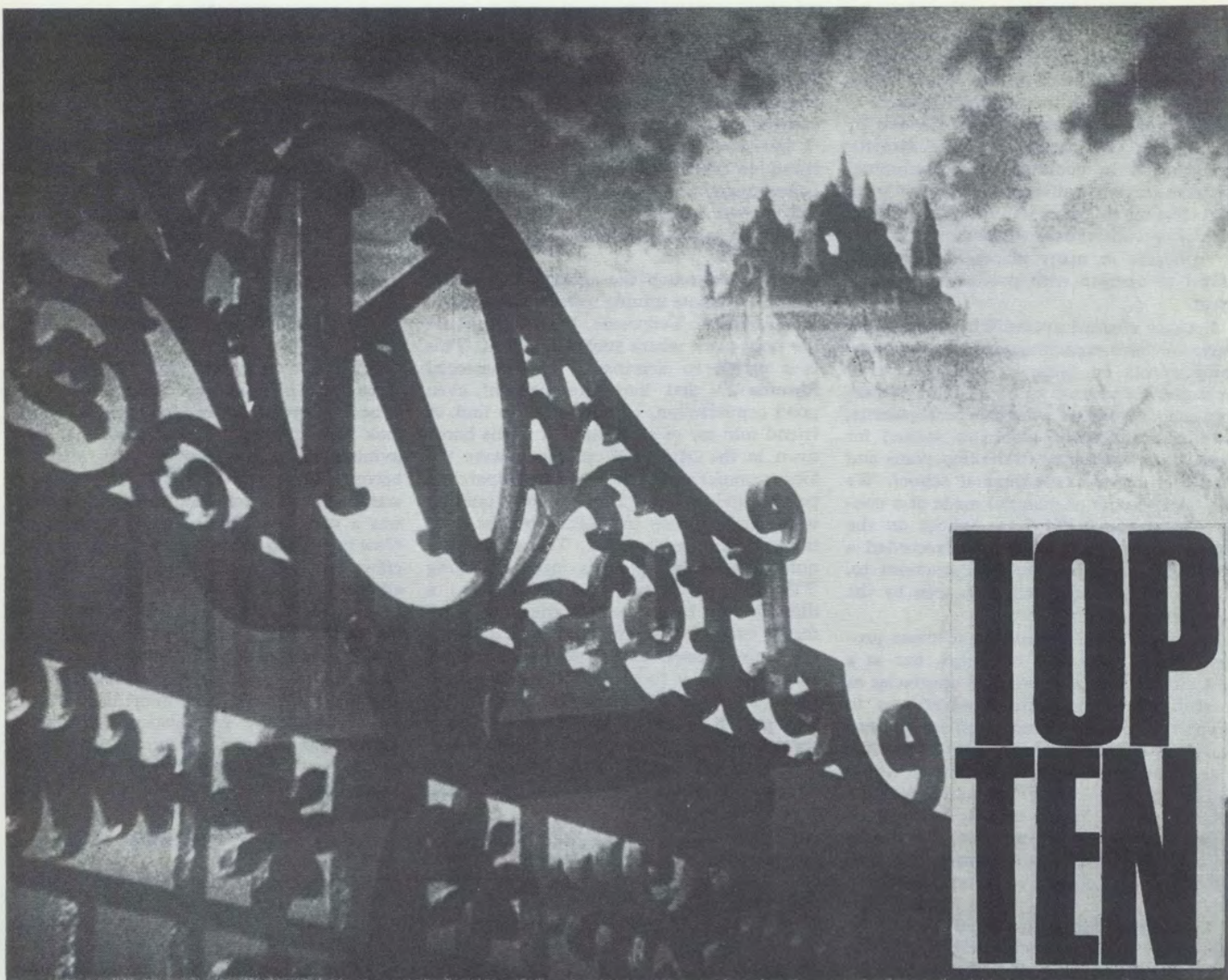
It should be stated in conclusion that the half-inch videotape scene in the U.S.,

particularly in New York City, is not confined to such application as I have described. Woodie and Stana Vasulka are among the many video artists whose Abstract, or Surrealist, or Dadaesque, or Videokinetic tapes are getting generous reviews in the press and shown in established museums like the Whitney and the Gallery of Modern Art. Encounter groups are into video in a big way, as are practitioners of many brands of psychotherapy. Even the pornographic market has discovered the gadget, and its facility for instant playback has stretched the possibilities for self-worship far beyond the innocent distractions known to Narcissus.

As a film teacher, I find video's advantages both obvious and almost terrifying. When everyone on the set can, in effect, look through the viewfinder via his own monitor as the shooting goes on, selection becomes almost too public an act. Maybe I was born in the wrong era, when film-making was a very personal and ego-gratifying art. Now it can also become a genuine communal effort. Asking if better films will result from all this is a bit like asking in 1860 if photography would ruin or improve the art of portrait painting. (And if that is an accurate analogy then surely film is in deep trouble.) Nonetheless, tape is here, portable at last and flexible. It can give immediate reassurance, immediate gratification. It is great fun to play with and not too awfully expensive to use. Only the very rich can say that about film. ■

Videotape camera at a rock concert in Charleston; and (below right) a 'Challenge for Change' programme in which a pub owner in Alberta films his customers.





The top ten

Citizen Kane (Welles, 1941)	32
La Règle du Jeu (Renoir, 1939)	28
Battleship Potemkin (Eisenstein, 1925)	16
8½ (Fellini, 1963)	15
L'Avventura (Antonioni, 1960)	12
Persona (Bergman, 1967)	12
The Passion of Joan of Arc (Dreyer, 1928)	11
The General (Keaton/Bruckman, 1926)	10
The Magnificent Ambersons (Welles, 1942)	10
Ugetsu Monogatari (Mizoguchi, 1953)	9
Wild Strawberries (Bergman, 1957)	9

Voting by Directors

Orson Welles	46
Jean Renoir	41
Ingmar Bergman	37
Luis Buñuel	33
Sergei Eisenstein	29
John Ford	28
Jean-Luc Godard	28
Buster Keaton	25
Federico Fellini	23
Michelangelo Antonioni	22
Charles Chaplin	22
Carl Dreyer	22

Runners-up

The Gold Rush (Chaplin, 1925)	8
Hiroshima mon Amour (Resnais, 1959)	
Ikiru (Kurosawa, 1952)	
Ivan the Terrible (Eisenstein, 1943-46)	
Pierrot le Fou (Godard, 1965)	
Vertigo (Hitchcock, 1958)	7
La Grande Illusion (Renoir, 1937)	
Mouchette (Bresson, 1966)	
The Searchers (Ford, 1956)	
Sunrise (Murnau, 1927)	
2001: A Space Odyssey (Kubrick, 1968)	
Viridiana (Buñuel, 1961)	

The top ten, 1962

Citizen Kane (Welles, 1941)	22
L'Avventura (Antonioni, 1960)	20
La Règle du Jeu (Renoir, 1939)	19
Greed (von Stroheim, 1924)	17
Ugetsu Monogatari (Mizoguchi, 1953)	
Battleship Potemkin (Eisenstein, 1925)	16
Bicycle Thieves (De Sica, 1949)	
Ivan the Terrible (Eisenstein, 1943-46)	14
La Terra Trema (Visconti, 1948)	
L'Atalante (Vigo, 1933)	13

TOP TEN

72

It is ten years since SIGHT AND SOUND last invited critics to play the Top Ten game. We had first done it back in 1952, when it seemed a good idea to find out what critics thought in answer to a Brussels referendum among film-makers. (On that occasion, *Bicycle Thieves*, *City Lights*, *The Gold Rush* and *Potemkin* were top four for both critics and film-makers.) In our January 1962 issue we repeated the exercise; and we felt we couldn't let this anniversary pass without staging a third round.

Obviously, Top Ten lists are best approached with trepidation or amusement by compilers and with some scepticism by readers. It's manifestly impossible to name the 'best' of anything; but it's fractionally less impossible to come up with a list of personal choices. Critics, as in 1962, were

invited to be as subjective and idiosyncratic as they chose—to list the films they would personally want to see again, or could least imagine having to live without, rather than to try to think themselves into positions of impossible objectivity. We wanted to see, among other things, how the screen classics stood up in the light of 1972, how much the international perspective might have shifted, whether the silent cinema still held its ground. (Plainly it does: three silents in the top ten this time, against only *Potemkin* and *Greed* in 1962.)

We're grateful to all our contributors, and apologetic about the affront to their sense of critical justice in that arbitrary figure of ten. 'Plus, plus, plus...' comes the repeated cry. Several people have made a point of precisely dating their lists: on another day, at another hour, the titles would be different. We also apologise to critics whose lists reached us too late for publication, though we have been able to add their votes to the main tally. Altogether, 89 critics' views are represented.

And what emerges? First, something very obvious, but perhaps worth repeating: that film really is the most international of all the arts which use the written or spoken word. It would often be difficult to guess from an individual list which continent, let alone which country, the critic came from. Though, again, there are exceptions. Amita Malik is one of several people who have pointed out the problems and restrictions on actually seeing films. 'For instance,' she writes, 'had I seen all the Buñuels my choice might not have been *Nazarin*. Having seen only *Los Olvidados* and *Nazarin*, I am putting the second in more as a vote for Buñuel.'

Again, *Citizen Kane* tops the list—astoundingly, it didn't even make the top ten back in 1952. Philip French's unnervingly accurate prediction—*Kane* and *La Règle du Jeu* out in front, *L'Avventura* and *Bicycle Thieves* off the list, and *8½* and *Persona* as likeliest newcomers—missed out only on the *L'Avventura* guess. *Kane* and *La Règle du Jeu*, respectively first and third in a close-run finish in 1962, have this time left the rest of the field standing. In general, the enormous range of individual choices reflects what one would expect: a more splintered, fragmented film culture. But in another sense that is belied by the agreement on these two films.

The final consensus is also rather strikingly on the side of the classics. In 1952 *Bicycle Thieves* (1949) topped the poll; in 1962 *L'Avventura* (1960) took second place and *Hiroshima mon Amour* (1959) led the runners-up. This time round, the only 1960s films come from Bergman and Fellini, neither of whom could exactly be called new men. In the voting, the underground remains largely underground; *Pierrot le Fou* wins out over the political Godard of recent years; and there's surprisingly little evidence of what is sometimes suggested as another mood of the times—a move away from fiction towards fact. No one, incidentally, listed a television film.

Buster Keaton was probably the great rediscovery of the 1960s, and among directors Keaton just edges past Chaplin. But if there are surprises, they are less in what's new than in some apparent re-

assessments. Dreyer has gained ground; Stroheim has lost it. Vigo, sadly, seems to have faded for the time being from the international critical consciousness: *L'Atalante* and *Zéro de Conduite*, which in 1962 collected 24 votes between them, now muster only a pitiful half-dozen.

It would be foolish to risk generalisations on the shaky evidence of this kind of poll, but it's hard to resist one or two speculative conclusions. That, allowing for every variation in outlook and taste, the 1972 list is weighted more heavily than might have been expected (no less solidly than the 1962 list) towards orthodoxy. In this country, certainly, the 1950s were the decade which opened up previously unknown areas—the discovery of Japanese and Indian cinema, the first big retrospectives at the National Film Theatre. The 1960s have produced nothing to equal, in worldwide impact, the effect of neo-realism in the 1940s or of everything summed up in the phrase 'new wave' at the end of the 1950s. The discoveries of the past decade have been of the kind that split rather than unite critical opinion; and when the votes are added agreement settles on the proven masters. The most potent word in the cinema, it seems, is still *Rosebud*.

Critics' Lists

Jan Aghed

Sweden SYDVENSKA DAGBLADET SNALLPOSTEN
My Darling Clementine, The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance, *Pierrot le Fou*, Oz Fuzis (*Guerra*), *Vertigo*, The Wild Bunch, La Hora de los Hornos (*Solanas*), *Greed*, *L'Atalante*, The Magnificent Ambersons.

... A silly and extremely unpleasant little pastime, from which I extract myself with the above, partly no doubt ephemeral list, and profound guilt feelings towards many absentees.

Adriano Aprà

Italy FILMSTUDIO '70

Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach, La Concentration (*Philippe Garrel*), Ice (*Robert Kramer*), Mare's Tail (*David Larcher*), My Hustler (*Warhol*), Nostra Signora dei Turchi (*Carmelo Bene*), Partisan Zenshi (*Noriaki Tsuchimoto*), *Pierrot le Fou*, He Died After the War (*Oshima*), The 'Ile aux Coudres' Trilogy (*Pierre Perrault*).

Films of the sixties made by directors of the sixties.

Francisco Aranda

Spain

L'Age d'Or, Battleship Potemkin, Citizen Kane, Monsieur Verdoux, The Passion of Joan of Arc, Paths of Glory, Tabu, La Terra Trema, Haxan (*Christensen*), You Only Live Once.

José Carlos Avellar

Brazil JORNAL DO BRASIL

Pierrot le Fou, Ivan the Terrible, The Hour of the Wolf, Terra em Transe (*Rocha*), The Last Laugh, L'Année Dernière à Marienbad, Vidas Secas (*Nelson Pereira dos Santos*), Tristana, La Hora de los Hornos (*Solanas*), Pickpocket.

Gianalberto Bendazzi

Italy AVANTI!

Battleship Potemkin, Man of Aran, The Passion of Joan of Arc, A Nous la Liberté, *8½*, Citizen Kane, Au Hasard, Balthazar, It's a Wonderful Life (*Capra*), The Deserter and the Nomads

(*Jakubisko*), Pas de Deux (*McLaren*).

I give you my list not like a critic but like a spectator. These ten are the films I loved more, and the reason was silent.

Claude Beylie

France CINEMA 71

Band of Angels (*Walsh*), Birth of a Nation, A Countess from Hong Kong, Gertrud, M (*Lang*), La Règle du Jeu, Sansho Dayu, Shanghai Gesture, Sunrise, Young Mr. Lincoln.

Stig Björkman

Sweden CHAPLIN

Citizen Kane, *Vertigo*, *Pierrot le Fou*, Lola, L'Avventura, Rio Bravo, La Carrosse d'Or, Persona, Sherlock Jr., Les Vampires (*Feuillade*).

Regretfully, I have had to disregard film-makers like Buñuel and Chabrol, Lewis and Losey, Mizoguchi and Rossellini, Vertov and Vigo, or singular masterpieces like 'Freaks' or 'Night of the Hunter'.

Peter Bogdanovich

United States

Only Angels Have Wings, Young Mr. Lincoln, The Magnificent Ambersons, Red River, She Wore a Yellow Ribbon, The Searchers, Rio Bravo, Touch of Evil, *Vertigo*, North by Northwest.

I don't have favourite movies as much as I have favourite directors—men whose company I enjoy. And it depends very much on my mood which of their various works I feel like being with; whether I want to be in the presence of Hawks in his 'Bringing Up Baby' mood or his 'Only Angels Have Wings' mood. This is, at best, a rough list based on an attempt to guess which mood I'm most often in. The order is chronological.

Jaroslav Broz

Czechoslovakia

La Notte, The Silence, The Marat/Sade, Viridiana, La Dolce Vita, Kwaidan (*Kobayashi*), 2001: A Space Odyssey, Ivan Detstvo (*Tarkovsky*), Jules et Jim, Ashes and Diamonds.

... Films of still established directors released during the last fifteen years.

Edoardo Bruno

Italy FILMCRITICA

Viaggio in Italia, The Night of the Hunter, Ivan the Terrible, The Exterminating Angel, La Nuit de Carrefour (*Renoir*), Shanghai Gesture, The Trial (*Welles*), L'Atalante, Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach, Les Carabiniers.

Un programma incompleto che mi piacerebbe vedere come esempio di un 'cinema di tendenza'.

Felix Bucher

Switzerland

Les Enfants du Paradis, Citizen Kane, Man of Aran, The General, Andrei Roublev, La Marseillaise, The Last Laugh, Intolerance, *8½*, An Autumn Afternoon.

'Andrei Roublev'



Ian Cameron

Great Britain MOVIE

Adieu Philippine (Jacques Rozier), The Awful Truth (McCarey), Judex (Franju), North by Northwest, La Règle du Jeu, Shin Heike Monogatari (Mizoguchi), The Switchboard Operator, A Time to Love and a Time to Die (Sirk), Viva L'Italia, Wild River.

The ten films I feel I can least do without today...

Giulio Cesare Castello

Italy

Haxan (Christensen), Go West (Keaton), The Wedding March, Trouble in Paradise, Love Me Tonight, Limelight, Paths of Glory, Hiroshima mon Amour, La Dolce Vita, The Leopard (just the ball sequence, but I would perhaps prefer a Visconti anthology including also 'Senso' and 'Death in Venice').

Henry Chapier

France COMBAT

America, America, Andrei Roublev, L'Année Dernière à Marienbad, La Chinoise, The Damned, Fellini-Satyricon, Harakiri (Kobayashi), The Servant, Teorema, La Voie Lactée.



'La Voie Lactée'

Carlos Clarens

United States

La Règle du Jeu, Lola Montès, Ugetsu Monogatari, The Bandwagon, Our Hospitality, A Star is Born (Cukor), Persona, The Searchers, The Scarlet Empress, Psycho.

Jay Cocks

United States TIME

The General, Jules et Jim, The Magnificent Ambersons, Persona, The Searchers, The Seven Samurai, The Third Man, 2001: A Space Odyssey, The Wild Bunch, Zéro de Conduite.

John Coleman

Great Britain NEW STATESMAN

Boudu Sauvage des Eaux, The Cameraman, Charulata, The Exterminating Angel, I Fidan-zati, Ikiru, The Magnificent Ambersons, Les Quatre Cents Coups, Sawdust and Tinsel, Singin' in the Rain.

Philip Coorey

CEYLON

The Apu Trilogy, Citizen Kane, If... The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance, Memories of Underdevelopment (Tomas Alea), Monsieur Verdoux, The Passion of Joan of Arc, Point Blank, Psycho, The Seven Samurai.

I should point out the very few opportunities we get here of seeing the films that we read about...

Richard Corliss

United States FILM COMMENT

Sunrise, La Règle du Jeu, His Girl Friday, The Lady Eve, Citizen Kane, Casablanca, Les Enfants du Paradis, Letter from an Unknown Woman, The Searchers, The Seventh Seal, Psycho, Chinese Firedrill (Will Hindle).

I have cheated outrageously... a dozen cinematic saviours of which I am one grateful disciple.

I rather resist letting these films be identified by the director's name alone. Perhaps half of them are distinguished as much by the writing...

Jaime E. Costa

Uruguay CINE UNIVERSITARIO

Citizen Kane, La Dolce Vita, Hamlet (Olivier), Les Quatre Cents Coups, Singin' in the Rain, An American in Paris, A Star is Born (Cukor), Some Like It Hot, North by Northwest, My Darling Clementine.

Peter Cowie

Great Britain INTERNATIONAL FILM GUIDE

The Seventh Seal, Les Enfants du Paradis, L'Avventura, Duck Soup, Senso, Le Feu Follet, Jules et Jim, Hiroshima mon Amour, Les Parapluies de Cherbourg, She Wore a Yellow Ribbon.

This choice consists unashamedly of films I like more each time I see them, films that are all incurably romantic.

Edgardo Cozarinsky

Argentina

True Heart Susie, Sunrise, Trouble in Paradise, La Règle du Jeu, My Darling Clementine, The Fountainhead (Vidor), Vertigo, Persona, Deux ou trois Choses que je sais d'elle, Fritz Lang's complete works as one multi-episodic film.

October 11, 1971, 4 p.m. ... two days later or one hour earlier my choice could have been other.

Judith Crist

United States NEW YORK MAGAZINE

City Lights, La Règle du Jeu, Citizen Kane, La Grande Illusion, 8½, La Guerre est Finie, Ikiru, Winter Light, War and Peace (Bondarchuk), The Maltese Falcon.

Adina Darian

Romania CINEMA

The Cameraman, Ivan the Terrible, Citizen Kane, Bicycle Thieves, Hamlet (Olivier), Salvatore Giuliano, Blow-Up, If... Romeo and Juliet (Zeffirelli), Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid.

Jan Dawson

Great Britain MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN

The Birds Come to Die in Peru (Romain Gary), La Femme Infidèle, Hellzapoppin, Le Mépris, Mouchette, Muriel, Nicht Versöhnt, Our Hospitality, The Passion of Joan of Arc, Paths of Glory.

An alphabetical list that got as far as 'P'... very unfair to 'The Red Desert', 'La Règle du Jeu', 'The Spider's Strategy', 'Tirez sur le Pianiste', 'Walkabout' and 'Weekend'.

Mauritz Edström

Sweden DAGENS NYHETER

Los Olvidados, Nazarin, The Exterminating Angel, The General, Day of Wrath, Mouchette, La Jetée (Marker), Teorema, The Iron Horse, La Hora de los Hornos (Solanas).

This is just a contemporary choice. I have classics too! The whole list could have been Buñuel, the most classic and most contemporary of them all.

'La Jetée'



Lotte Eisner

France

Earth, Greed, Ivan the Terrible (Part Two, colour sequences), The Idiot (Kurosawa), M (Lang), Monsieur Verdoux, The Passion of Joan of Arc, La Règle du Jeu, Senso, Sunrise.

Allen Eyles

Great Britain FOCUS ON FILM

Late Autumn (Ozu), She Wore a Yellow Ribbon, Intolerance, The Magnificent Ambersons, A Night at the Opera, Le Amiche, Palm Beach Story (Sturges), Summer Holiday (Mamoulian), Duel in the Sun, Ride the High Country (Peckinpah).

This is today's list, not yesterday's, not tomorrow's...

Stephen Farber

United States

Citizen Kane, 8½, Jules et Jim, Lawrence of Arabia (the uncut version), The Manchurian Candidate, Masculin Féminin, The Night of the Hunter, Performance, Persona, La Règle du Jeu.

Jean-Paul Fargier, Gerard LeBlanc

France CINETHIQUE

British Sounds, Chapayev, The East is Red (Anon; China), Enthusiasm (Vertov), Forward, Soviet (Vertov), Lotte in Italia (Godard), Pravda (Godard), Red Detachment of Women (Anon; China), The Sixth Part of the World (Vertov), Un Film comme les Autres (Godard).

Voici notre liste des dix meilleurs films de ce que les critiques de cinéma appellent 'l'histoire du cinéma'.

Goffredo Fofi

Italy OMBRE ROSSI

Citizen Kane, La Règle du Jeu, October, Modern Times, M (Lang), Viridiana, Paisa, Day of Wrath, The Servant, La Hora de los Hornos (Solanas).

Philip French

Great Britain

Battleship Potemkin, The General, The Lady Vanishes, La Règle du Jeu, Stagecoach, Citizen Kane, Singin' in the Rain, Ikiru, Salvatore Giuliano, Winter Light.

Strictly a Desert Island selection, though I wouldn't be happy about a Ten Best list that didn't include a thriller, a silent comedy, a Western and a musical. Only four of my ten favourite directors are represented.

John Gillett

Great Britain

L'Avventura, Early Autumn (Ozu), Happiness (Medvedkin), Ivan the Terrible, Nazarin, Olympic Games 1936 (Riefenstahl), La Règle du Jeu, Sansho Dayu, The Searchers, Seven Chances.

... and it breaks my heart to exclude Stroheim, Ophuls and Dreyer.

Penelope Gilliatt

Great Britain THE NEW YORKER

The Navigator, La Règle du Jeu, 8½, Persona, Ikiru, Citizen Kane, The Apu Trilogy, Battleship Potemkin, Jules et Jim, Weekend.

... and I can't find the room I should for 'Zéro de Conduite'.

Verina Glaessner

Great Britain TIME OUT

The Man with a Movie Camera, Happiness (Medvedkin), King Kong, The Shame, Wave-length (Mike Snow), The Boy (Oshima), Chelsea Girls, Nosferatu, Le Boucher, Sex and the Single Girl (Quine).

Giovanni Grazzini

Italy CORRIERE DELLA SERA

Battleship Potemkin, The Circus, La Grande

Illusion, Bicycle Thieves, 8½, Antonio das Mortes, The Passion of Joan of Arc, Silence and Cry (*Jancsó*), Mouchette, Andrei Roublev.

Nina Hibbin

Great Britain MORNING STAR

Ikiru, Tristana, Death in Venice, Man of Aran, La Règle du Jeu, Battleship Potemkin, The Great Dictator, Il Posto, Kes, The End of St. Petersburg.

Margaret Hinxman

Great Britain SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

All Quiet on the Western Front, Citizen Kane, Gone with the Wind, Letter from an Unknown Woman, Accident, Tristana, The Grapes of Wrath, Wild Strawberries, Sunset Boulevard, La Grande Illusion.

Penelope Houston

Great Britain SIGHT AND SOUND

Au Hasard, Balthazar, Charulata, Citizen Kane, The Eclipse, The General, Miracle of Morgan's Creek (*Sturges*), Muriel, La Règle du Jeu, Silence and Cry (*Jancsó*), 2001: A Space Odyssey.



'Miracle of Morgan's Creek'

Gilles Jacob

France

The Exterminating Angel, L'Avventura, Singin' in the Rain, The Navigator, Lady from Shanghai, Foolish Wives, Lumière d'Été (*Grémillon*), La Règle du Jeu, Duck Soup, Smiles of a Summer Night.

Stanley Kauffmann

United States NEW REPUBLIC

The Gold Rush, Battleship Potemkin, The General, The Passion of Joan of Arc, La Grande Illusion, Citizen Kane, Rashomon, Tokyo Story, L'Avventura, Persona.

Arthur Knight

United States SATURDAY REVIEW

A Nous la Liberté, Bicycle Thieves, Citizen Kane, City Lights, Ikiru, La Notte, The Passion of Joan of Arc, Persona, Punishment Park (*Peter Watkins*), Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?

Onat Kutlar

Turkey FILM

Battleship Potemkin, Mother, The Gold Rush, Battle of Algiers, Ugetsu Monogatari, Los Olvidados, Antonio das Mortes, Death in Venice, Hiroshima mon Amour, Hamlet (*Kozintsev*).

John Francis Lane

Great Britain/Italy

Intolerance, The Passion of Joan of Arc, Battleship Potemkin, Modern Times, Citizen Kane, Rome, Open City, I Vitelloni, Wild Strawberries, L'Avventura, A Bout de Souffle.

Obviously these are not my ten favourite films of all time: they are those that, according to my vision of the cinema, represent the ten most influential films in the history of the cinema.

Jay Leyda

United States

L'Age d'Or, Rashomon, The World of Apu, 8½, Storm (*Chin Shan*), The Shame, The Money Order (*Sembene*), Andrei Roublev, The Conformist, Day by Day (*Ioseliani*).

I've stuck to the absurd Ten, but made them all post-1930. Otherwise, madness.

Anthony Macklin

United States FILM HERITAGE

Birth of a Nation, Bonnie and Clyde, Citizen Kane, 8½, Les Jeux Interdits, The General, The Gold Rush, L'Avventura, Battleship Potemkin, The Seventh Seal.

Derek Malcolm

Great Britain THE GUARDIAN

Earth, Sons of the Desert (*Laurel and Hardy*), La Règle du Jeu, Fantasia, The Magnificent Ambersons, Day of Wrath, Ugetsu Monogatari, Wild Strawberries, An Autumn Afternoon, Vivre sa Vie.

Not the greatest, but those I could least bear never to see again—at the moment. All change next week.

Amita Malik

India THE STATESMAN

The Apu Trilogy, The Battle of Algiers, Citizen Kane, Closely Observed Trains, The Gold Rush, La Grande Illusion, Hiroshima mon Amour, Nazarin, Rashomon, Wild Strawberries.

Roger Manvell

Great Britain

La Notte, Persona, The Gold Rush, Battleship Potemkin, 8½, The General, Hamlet (*Kozintsev*), Mother, Aparajito, Hiroshima mon Amour.

Marcel Martin

France CINEMA '71

Alexander Nevsky, La Règle du Jeu, Senso, Ugetsu Monogatari, Hiroshima mon Amour, L'Avventura, Lola Montès, Pierrot le Fou, Mouchette, A Passion.

Paul Mayersberg

Great Britain

L'Age d'Or, L'Année Dernière à Marienbad, Chappaqua (*Conrad Rooks*), Citizen Kane, Mouchette, Orphée, Persona, Rome, Open City, Strike, Vertigo.

Boleslaw Michalek

Poland

Nanook of the North, Strike, The Gold Rush, Citizen Kane, Ossessione, Rashomon, Les Vacances de M. Hulot, Viridiana, Wild Strawberries, 8½.

Tom Milne

Great Britain

French Can-Can, Les Yeux sans Visage, The Night of the Hunter, The Sun Shines Bright, Love Me Tonight, Au Hasard, Balthazar, Our Hospitality, El, The Magnificent Ambersons, L'Amour Fou (*Rivette*).

Ib Monty

Denmark

20th Century (*Hawks*), Une Partie de Campagne, The Magnificent Ambersons, Listen to Britain, On the Town, Wagonmaster, Tokyo Story, Ugetsu Monogatari, The Seven Samurai, Playtime.

Morando Morandini

Italy

Wild Strawberries, Un Condamné à Mort s'est Echappé, Nazarin, Day of Wrath, Ivan the Terrible, Ugetsu Monogatari, La Grande Illusion, La Guerre est Finie, Paisa, Senso.

I've played the game with sound films . . . It's a pity for my beloved Keaton, Chaplin, Murnau, Stroheim . . .



'Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol'

Gene Moskowitz

United States VARIETY

Young Mr. Lincoln, The Life of O-Haru (*Mizoguchi*), Limelight, A Generation, Earth, La Règle du Jeu, Ivan the Terrible, No Greater Glory (*Borzage*), Andrei Roublev, Tristana.

Rui Nogueira

France

America, America, Os Deuses e os Mortes (*Guerra*), The Devil is a Woman, Gertrud, Her Man (*Tay Garnett*), Only Angels Have Wings, Queen Kelly, A Star is Born (*Cukor*), Sunrise, They Died With Their Boots On (*Walsh*).

Enno Patalas

West Germany FILMKRITIK

Intolerance (toned and tinted version), Austernprinzessin (*Lubitsch*), Phantom (*Murnau*), The Saga of Anatahan, Gertrud, Pierrot le Fou, Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol (*Rocha*), Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach, Neurasia (*Werner Schroeter*), Vent d'Est.

Not 'best' ten, but the ones which impressed/shocked/interested/moved my thoughts and feelings most . . . during the ten years since the last poll.

Morten Pii

Denmark KOSMORAMA

La Baie des Anges, The Bandwagon, Le Boucher, Listen to Britain, Lola, Peeping Tom, Sherlock Jr., Tirez sur le Pianiste, Touch of Evil, Les Vacances de M. Hulot.

A strictly emotional list with no regard for historical significance . . .

Dilys Powell

Great Britain SUNDAY TIMES

Ashes and Diamonds, Belle de Jour, Citizen Kane, The General, The Lady with the Little Dog, The Last Day of Summer (*Konwicki/Laskowski*), Lonely Are the Brave (*David Miller*), Il Mare, Le Million, Rear Window.

'Death in Venice' is too recent, and anyway I feel like giving some of the great current names—Visconti, Antonioni, Fellini, Resnais, Renoir—a rest. Resisting the temptation to list ten of the short Laurel and Hardy funnies . . .

'Twentieth Century'



Bjørn Rasmussen

Denmark

Viridiana, Battleship Potemkin, Citizen Kane, On the Town, The Gold Rush, Vampyr, The Cameraman, Ugetsu Monogatari, Duck Soup, The Seven Samurai.

Plus, plus, plus . . . from now on, 'S and S' must stand for 'Sadists of Sinema' . . .

David Robinson

Great Britain FINANCIAL TIMES

The Wedding March, L'Age d'Or, Our Hospitality, L'Enfant Sauvage, Le Mélomane (Méliès), Tokyo Story, City Lights, La Règle du Jeu, Belle de Jour, Stagecoach.

Richard Roud

United States/Great Britain

La Règle du Jeu, L'Atalante, Citizen Kane, Tokyo Story, Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne, Deux ou Trois Choses que je sais d'elle, Not Reconciled, The Spider's Strategy, The Go-Between, Muriel.

Andrew Sarris

United States VILLAGE VOICE

Madame De . . . , Lola Montès, Ugetsu Monogatari, La Règle du Jeu, Vertigo, The Searchers, Sherlock Jr., Francesco Giullare di Dio (Rossellini), Magnificent Ambersons, Belle de Jour.

Tadao Sato

Japan

Battleship Potemkin, Brief Encounter, Paisa, Tokyo Story, Pather Panchali, Wild Strawberries, Ashes and Diamonds, L'Année Dernière à Marienbad, West Side Story, Nippon Konchuyuki (Shohei Imamura).

Hans Schiller

Sweden SVENSKA DAGBLADET

Sunrise, Zéro de Conduite, La Règle du Jeu, Ugetsu Monogatari, Bande à Part, Gertrud, Marnie, Blow-Up, Mouchette, Rendez-vous à Bray (Delvaux).

Siegfried Schober

West Germany SÜDDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG

Citizen Kane, The Birds, Viaggio in Italia, Antonio das Mortes, Partner (Bertolucci), Pierrot le Fou, La Règle du Jeu, Chelsea Girls, L'Amour Fou (Rivette), To Have and Have Not.

Paul Schrader

United States CINEMA

An Autumn Afternoon, Journal d'une Curé de Campagne, My Darling Clementine, The Passion of Joan of Arc, Masculin Féminin, La Règle du Jeu, Viaggio in Italia, Kiss Me Deadly (Aldrich), Lolita, Performance.

'Sansho Dayu'

Your ten film limit stipulation . . . threatens to reduce the critic to a familiar litany of 'Introduction to the Art of the Cinema' greats. Therefore I have let Jennings ('Fires Were Started'), Welles ('Touch of Evil') and Murnau ('Nosferatu') suffer at the hands of Aldrich, Kubrick and Cammell/Roeg; but what of 'Comanche Station', 'Naked Spur' and 'Gun Crazy'?

Josef Sryck

Israel HAARETZ

Umberto D., The Czech Year (Trnka), Ikiru, Eva (Losey), The Invention of Evil (Karel Zeman), Five Easy Pieces (Rafelson), Wild Strawberries, 8½, Closely Observed Trains, To Be Or Not To Be (Lubitsch).

'Bicycle Thieves' and 'Citizen Kane' are the kind of films I ought to see again. . . . Here are the films I like to see again, today and at this moment.

Elliott Stein

United States

The Bat Whispers (Roland West), The Bride of Frankenstein (Whale), The Dance of Life (John Cromwell), Das Stahltier (Willy Ziehlke), Gertrud, King Kong, The Magnificent Ambersons, Peter Pan (Brenon), Scorpio Rising (Anger), An Actor's Revenge.

Philip Strick

Great Britain

L'Avventura, Marnie, Meet Me in St. Louis, Persona, Rashomon, The Searchers, Teorema, 2001: A Space Odyssey, Viridiana, Weekend.

John Russell Taylor

Great Britain THE TIMES

Le! Journal d'un Curé de Campagne, Funny Face, 8½, The General, Triumph of the Will, The Old Dark House (Whale), La Voie Lactée, Psycho, Kind Hearts and Coronets, Teorema.

Tomorrow I might change half the list, but there would still be one Keaton, one Bresson, one Fellini, one Buñuel, one Hitchcock, one musical, one horror film . . . I think!

Christian Braad Thomsen

Denmark

A Bout de Souffle, Pierrot le Fou, Weekend, Antonio das Mortes, Der Leone Have Sept Cabecas (Rocha), Os Deuses e os Mortes (Guerra), Lola, Tirez sur le Pianiste, La Peau Douce, Au Hasard, Balthazar.

Véra Volmane

France

Wild Strawberries, 8½, Fellini-Satyricon, Ivan the Terrible, Viridiana, L'Avventura, Hiroshima mon Amour, Andrei Roublev, Johnny Got His Gun (Dalton Trumbo), The Go-Between.

J'ai pensé à des films relativement récents . . .



'The Bat Whispers'

Alexander Walker

Great Britain EVENING STANDARD

Dr. Strangelove, Citizen Kane, La Règle du Jeu, 2001: A Space Odyssey, The Gold Rush, Blow-Up, The Wind (Sjöström), L'Année Dernière à Marienbad, L'Avventura, 42nd Street.

Mike Wallington

Great Britain CINEMA

Shin Heike Monogatari (Mizoguchi), La Signora di Tutti (Ophüls), Arsenal, The Saga of Anatahan, Francesco Giullare di Dio (Rossellini), His Butler's Sister (Borzage), Written on the Wind (Sirk), Vertigo, Magick Lantern Cycle (Anger), Vampyr.

Plus . . . Vigo, Murnau, Keaton, Welles, Vidor, Beavers and Kubelka.

David Wilson

Great Britain SIGHT AND SOUND

The Burmese Harp, Citizen Kane, Letter from an Unknown Woman, Love Me Tonight, Mr. Smith Goes to Washington, The Navigator, Paths of Glory, Persona, La Règle du Jeu, The Scarlet Empress.

No Eisenstein, no Pudovkin, no Vertov; no Murnau, no Lang, no Cocteau; no Antonioni, no Resnais; no Wajda, no Ray. They're on tomorrow's list, as would be 'The Ladykillers' and Laurel and Hardy.

John Weisman

United States ROLLING STONE

A Night at the Opera, A Walk in the Sun (Milestone), Berlin: Rhythm of a City (Ruttman), The Hustler, Point Blank, Red River, The Servant, The Seventh Seal, The Wild Bunch.

Films I'd most like to see again . . . and again . . . and again.

Robin Wood

Great Britain

Sansho Dayu, Letter from an Unknown Woman, A Passion, La Règle du Jeu, Rio Bravo, Sunrise, Vertigo, Bigger than Life (Nicholas Ray), Days and Nights in the Forest (Satyajit Ray), Viaggio in Italia.

Francis Wyndham

Great Britain SUNDAY TIMES MAGAZINE

Alice Adams (Stevens), Battle of Algiers, Citizen Kane, Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne, Le Deuxième Souffle (Melville), The Eclipse, Flesh (Paul Morrissey), Imitation of Life (Sirk), Meet Me in St. Louis, A Star is Born (Cukor).

Paul D. Zimmerman

United States NEWSWEEK

A Nous la Liberté, Les Enfants du Paradis, Intolerance, Kind Hearts and Coronets, Modern Times, Zéro de Conduite, Olympic Games 1936, The Seven Samurai, The Lady Vanishes, La Grande Illusion.



IN THE PICTURE



Bette

In the flesh, she is a surprisingly small woman. Neat bones, fastidiously formed features, figure well contained. Nothing glaring. The famous scathing mouth turns out to be standard size and far from deadly. But the atmosphere at Pinewood on the set of Bette Davis' latest film, *Madame Sin*, is electric. You know you are in the presence. Not that she expects or invites attention. She simply commands the court through a formidable sense of being. (It is no accident that one remembers her Elizabeth the First and Catherine the Great before other, better performances.)

Time and hindsight have bequeathed her a celebrity beyond that of great actress and superstar. There is no one left who represents so accurately what Hollywood was all about. Even her rebellions, her suspensions, her legal battle with Jack Warner against the slavery of the contract system, were characteristic. For Hollywood was shaped by rebels who created a governing Establishment out of a revolutionary cabal.

Remembering her past protests, she is perhaps slightly astonished at the fiercely protective affection she feels for those forty tough, humiliating, exhilarating years of 'the career'. She talks about 'the career' as if it were some separate astral body orbiting around the earthbound being of Bette Davis and not totally under control.

'Films were always a great art. We who worked in them during the Thirties—the so-called golden age of Hollywood—knew that. But the critics didn't. They didn't take them seriously. You know why? Because you could go into the movie house at any time, right in the middle of the film. Not like the theatre where you had to be there on time for the performance. Worst thing that

happened to the cinema. Continuous performances. Should never have been allowed. But that's what helped create the cinema habit, they say.' The tone of the voice says as much as the dialogue. Seconds after the word 'theatre' has died in the ear, you can still feel the sting of venom in its tail: left over, no doubt, from the time when the critics saved their reverence for the stage and their ridicule for the screen.

She puffs hard on a cigarette, familiarly. Her costume for *Madame Sin*—black wig, green eye-makeup, black trouser suit loaded with jewelled medallions—would intimidate most women. But she knows exactly how to dominate the cloth and paint and rhinestones—it's part of her expertise.

'This film is a new experience for me. For one thing, it's a crime fantasy and usually I like to find some way of relating to my characters. But how can you relate to someone as outrageous as Madame Sin? So I have to invent all the time. It's fun. They make films in a completely different way, these days. So I just let this young director David Greene lead me around by the nose. He's brilliant. But different, as I say. Here we go out on location for authenticity. In my time we created exteriors so perfectly in the studio, like the set for *The Petrified Forest* for instance, that you couldn't even tell the difference. And we were able to get on with the job instead of waiting around for the weather. But that's the way they do it now. I'm learning. But I can't say I feel comfortable. It'll never be the same again. Those days are gone, but gone. They'll never come back...'

She has a real respect for her producer and co-actor Robert Wagner. 'That young man is a great administrator. Producing is something an actor can do. But these actors who turn directors!

It's madness. I've made eighty films and I can't begin to know how you should go about directing a film... Like most veterans of the Hollywood system, she instinctively distrusts a lack of organisation, a sloppy approach to the job. Arduous work is one thing, wasted work is unforgivable. Though guarded in her comments on the new cinema styles, she obviously finds the hit-and-miss unprepared quality of some new films hardest to take.

'The first indication I had that they wanted a clip from *Now Voyager* for *Summer of '42* came from the studio, who implied that it would be used for a laugh. My lawyer wrote back saying if they wanted a clip to laugh at why didn't they choose a scene from one of their current films. How about that...? Actually, I gather it was used very tastefully and made an important point in the story. I've a great admiration for Robert Mulligan anyway. You know, I had to fight to get *Now Voyager*. Miss Irene Dunne was going to do it. And I stormed into Hal Wallis' office—he found all my best subjects, a genius! I told him how dare he cast Miss Dunne, when I was under contract? It was my world. I knew all about that woman and her possessive New England mother.

'I was lucky. A lot of my films were produced by a man named Henry Blanke, who had tremendous taste. Things have gone too far these days on the screen, what should be honest becomes vulgar. But we used to get so mad all the time having to compromise. You remember *Winter Meeting*, about the love affair between a woman and a man who was study-

ing for the priesthood. Well, this was a ferocious story. She hated his Church and his faith. She couldn't understand why he was shutting himself away from her. And it was tough. You could do it now, properly. But then they had to water it down so much it was just a mild romance with bits of Catholicism around the fringes.

'And then the classic case was *The Letter*. The Code said I had to die because I was a murderess. William Wyler got around that as well as he possibly could, but it missed the point of the story which came out in that last line of hers—"The tragedy is I still love the man I killed".'

Somehow the totally forgettable *Fashions of 1934* comes up. Does a copy even exist? 'Wasn't that ghastly? That was my Garbo period. They gave me this long blonde wig because they wanted us all to look like imitations of Garbo. But I didn't let them get away with that for long. I used to go into the commissary at Warners and look at the pictures round the walls and I swear to you that every young girl there looked exactly the same. They always started out wanting to fix your teeth, that was the first thing, and then to change your hair style and colouring. Margaret Sullavan, Katharine Hepburn and I were the hold-outs. We were the ones who dug our heels in and wouldn't be changed. I really felt sorry for those Hollywood people. They couldn't figure us out at all...'

She remembers, when she was first making her name on the stage, putting a New York milliner in his place when he had offered to send her a selection of hats because 'a hat is very special, it

Bette Davis as Madame Sin. Denholm Elliott in background





Hitchcock at work on 'Frenzy', his first British-made film since 'Stagefright'. With Anna Massie, Jon Finch

makes you feel a different person.' The upstart Bette replied, 'But I don't want to be different, I like the person I am.'

'All the same, hats are nice for an occasion,' she muses and, as in *All About Eve*, the sudden flashes of femininity, the lowering of the defences, make her seem very vulnerable, rather touching. 'The designers we had at Warners were so good. Orry-Kelly, Edith Head. They designed clothes for the people we were. Not like Adrian at Metro who designed fancy dress.'

'Metro was a fairy-tale studio compared to Warners. They made their people feel important, cherished. Great big dressing-rooms. All that stuff. I wouldn't have liked that. Nobody made us feel important at Warners. You just worked damned hard. Six or seven B pictures a year I made in the early Thirties. That's where I learned my trade, that's where we all learned our trade.'

'But it's a ruthless life and you had to fight all the time for quality. And sometimes it got so tiring. You'd go to the studio and think: why am I battling like this? Why don't I just give in? Will it really matter to the audience if that piece of dialogue isn't perfect, if that dress isn't quite right for the character? But now I see my films on television and I'm so glad I did stick out. Because the quality still shows.'

'*Jezebel*, that's where the career really began to take shape. Hal found *Jezebel* for me. I remember David Selznick wanted to sue us because we came out with it just before *Gone With the Wind*. But in a way I think it was truer to the feeling of the South at that time than his film. I've always felt *Gone With the Wind* would have been twice as good if it had been in black and white, more intimate, smaller. It's a pity these days that you have to film in colour, you can't make what is essentially a

black and white subject in black and white. *Baby Jane* would have been much too pretty in colour. On the other hand, *Elizabeth and Essex* and *Mr. Skeffington* would have been marvellous in colour. But in the Thirties, the studio was only allocated two colour films a year, because it was so expensive and there was only one process, Technicolor. Those of us who made money at the box office never got colour films because we didn't need that extra attraction. They gave the colour to the terrible scripts, as an added inducement to get the public in.'

About her colleagues, she talks sometimes sternly but always with understanding. One senses that Paul Muni on *Juarez* must have been a penance to work with, but she calls him 'Mr.' and prefers to remember the time when he didn't have to have an acre of make-up to portray a convincing character. 'He was so spontaneous, so good, in *Bordertown*, *Scarface*. In *Juarez* he wore this complete rubber mask which made him look exactly like the portraits and statues of Juarez in Mexico. The exhibitors weren't happy at all; they said "What's the point of having Muni if you can't recognise him?" Anyway, he had his part built up, too. Originally Juarez was a fringe character; the story was about the Emperor Maximilian, Brian Aherne, and his wife Carlotta, me. By the time they'd cut out some of our crucial scenes, the audience couldn't understand why Carlotta was going mad at the end, anyway. It didn't make sense.'

'People criticise Hollywood now. But we made some good films. Crusading films too—think about *Black Legion*, *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*, the anti-Nazi films. One of the saddest days of my life was when I went to a farewell party they gave on the stages at Warners. There was a still from every film that had ever been produced there on the walls,

and all the old-timers who were still alive turned up, supporting players like Frank McHugh, who often made the films. Those people had size... I came home and I could have wept, because I knew we'd never see the like of that party and that Hollywood again.'

The assistant director on *Madame Sin* pokes his head around the door of her dressing room and apologises for calling her so early, as it happened unnecessarily. 'Don't apologise,' she tells him. 'It's your job to anticipate the director's needs. It was the same with Wyler; if he needed a prop or an actor and you couldn't produce them, you'd have had to take the can back. You're only doing your job.' And from Bette Davis, there is no greater compliment.

MARGARET HINXMAN

Bonaparte et la Révolution

Abel Gance's new version of his 1926 *Napoléon* had its première in Paris on September 9, 1971. Initiated by André Malraux to form part of the bicentennial celebrations in 1969, progress was hampered by lack of money. Eventually, Claude Lelouch took the project over and released it through Les Films Treize.

To set matters straight, *Bonaparte et la Révolution* is not a definitive reconstruction of *Napoléon*. In its 4 hours 35 minutes, it contains the major episodes of the original—La Marseillaise, Corsica, Toulon, La Terreur, Vendémiaire, Le Bal des Victimes, Italie—but there is a great deal of extra material. 'My original film was not entirely historically correct,' says Gance. 'It contained melodrama. This version is absolutely authentic.' Gance's new researches are given pride of place; the film makes extensive use of documents, prints,

pamphlets and posters. Live action is occasionally combined with engravings through Gance's *Pictographe*. Stills and frozen frames are frequently used as cutaways.

The scenes photographed for the 1936 sound version of *Napoléon* are used freely; certain episodes of the original film have been jettisoned to provide room for the new shooting. The sequences of Napoleon's youth at Brienne have gone, although the snowball fight appears in a montage at the end. The majority of the episodes with Tristan Fleuri and Violine have been dispensed with, together with the subplot of Pozzo di Borgo and Salicetti. Nevertheless, all these characters appear in other sequences. The most significant loss, however, is the Triptyques—the 3-screen innovation which Gance hoped to transfer optically to 70 mm. 'No Brienne, no Triptyques,' says Gance. 'The film is naked! But Lelouch said it was powerful enough as it was on 35 mm.'

Although it is running at the Kinopanorama, at La Motte Picquet-Grenelle, where the Russian *War and Peace* was shown, the presentation is in the old Academy ratio. If future theatres insist on wide-screen, the cut-off will be severe. The large silent frame has already been cropped to accommodate the soundtrack, and this has meant a loss of height as well.



Napoleon at 81: Albert Dieudonné.

In a sequence at the beginning, Gance appears in colour to read a speech; the film returns to black and white at the end of the reel, and there is no attempt at tinting. But the quality of the original silent material is extremely good. The inserts from the 1936 version and the extra shooting of 1970 will be quite apparent to those who have seen the silent film. Nevertheless, Gance has included some sequences shot in 1926 that have not been seen since the 1927 première; among them is a version of the Bal des Victimes in which Napoleon reacts explosively to nudity and licentiousness among the dancers. The score for the 1927 première at the Opera was arranged by Honegger and included several original pieces. The 1936 version was scored by Henri Verdun, and much of his music has been retained for the new film, together with modern recordings of Beethoven and Mozart.

Disregarding the aesthetic argument of whether a silent film should be made to talk or not, I must admit that the post-synchronisation is frequently flawless. The impression is assisted, of course, by the number of speeches recorded with direct sound. But when lines are fitted to the silent sequences—and most of the time they fit exactly—the effect is quite supernatural. Evidently, when anyone spoke during the original shooting, they spoke lines—well-written, well-thought out lines. This was not common practice in the silent days; despite the number of lip-readers in the audience, actors would generally improvise. Not in *Napoléon*. Gance clearly conceived the film with all its elements present, and even in its silent form, sound played an important part: Napoleon entering the empty Convention and turning, startled, when the heavy doors slam behind him... Robespierre ordering his musician to play louder when Danton passes his window on the way to the guillotine... the spectacular introduction of the 'Marseillaise' at the Club des Cordeliers.

Gance and Albert Dieudonné, who played Napoleon, are both the same age—82 this year—yet both have dubbed their own voices. Gance goes as far as to appear in front of the camera once again, as St. Just, although in heavy silhouette. Dieudonné's voice sounds much the same as it did when he recorded it for the 1936 version.

Napoléon has always been a film unique in cinema history. The 1926 version anticipated Cinerama. The 1936 version anticipated stereophonic sound. This new version may set a new style—for directors to return to their early work and, by re-editing and re-shooting, produce a new film. It may render purists like me apologetic, but it might help solve the crisis in the cinema...

KEVIN BROWNLOW

Among the Missing

It is hard to say whether the number of unreleased films has increased with the creeping pauperisation of the cinema is going through, or remains the same because fast changing tastes can turn yesterday's turkey into tomorrow's sleeper. But the list of movies which studios and producers are not showing to any paying public is both an icy reminder of Charles Reade's aphorism that art is not imitation but illusion, and a piece of esoterica for the ultimate film freak.

This was indeed the year that was—the end of the three-year long night during which the American majors lost half a billion dollars (\$525,000,000 to be exact, although the final figure is expected to reach \$600 million). Almost half this amount falls into a category called 'inventory writedown', an auditors' expression meaning that failures were written off for what they were—losses. The majors, and that is everybody except AIP and



'England Made Me': Michael York in Peter Duffell's film of the Graham Greene novel.

Disney, reported \$250 million in writedowns, before taxes. They never list the losses by title (which could have been edifying), nor do they say at which point things went wrong, so that we don't know which project was 'written down' at its screenplay stage, during production or after completion. Some movies which are completed open for a few days and languish at the box-office or are laughed off the screen. In other instances, a direct sale to television is advisable, although the networks are beginning to read reviews and are turning down obvious losers.

Understandably, facts are hard to come by in this netherworld of instant write-offs, where the glare of publicity never shines. It is also a world where the difference between a one-week run on the lower half of a double bill and no release at all is a paper thing. The sudden success last summer of *Blue Water, White Death* and *The Hellstrom Chronicle* made National General take *The African Elephant* off the missing list and put it into circulation. Meanwhile, three new directors' first films have joined the list.

In 1970, screenwriter Charles Eastman (*Little Fauss and Big Halsy*) shot *The All-American Boy*, in which Jon Voight plays the title role of an amateur boxer. Also in 1970, newcomers Jim Frawley, a former actor, and 26-year-old Australian Quintin Martins shot California movies, for Cinema Center and M-G-M respectively. Frawley made *The Christian Licorice Store* (with Beau Bridges, Maud Adams, Gilbert Roland, and a cameo appearance by Jean Renoir) in Hollywood; while Martins shot *Thumb Tripping* (with Bruce Dern and Michael Burns) up and down the coast. The non-release of Frawley's first feature hasn't hurt him, since he has recently been filming *Dime Box* for Fox. Normally the forgiveness doesn't come that fast.

Newcomers, however, are by no means the only directors with instant defeats. John Frankenheimer's *The Extraordinary Sea-man* (David Niven, Faye Dunaway) was edited down to a desperate 70 minutes and withdrawn after a few bookings; Sidney Lumet's *The Appointment* (Omar Sharif, Anouk Aimée) was shown in San Francisco and immediately pulled out of circulation. And United Artists, for example, is sitting on a long list of overseas productions, from Skolimowski's *Adventures of Gerard* to John Boorman's *Leo the Last*. The towering cost of distribution is the main reason for majors deciding against even trying to put some films into release, even if they are their own productions.

When a distributor actually makes expensive efforts to save a shaky entry, as Warners did with Robert Altman's *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, it makes news. Only marginal newcomers, such as Don Rugoff's aggressive Cinema V or Jerry Gross' Cinemation, seem ready to throw big campaigns behind movies that others might abandon as instant defeats. Rugoff undertook an unprecedented campaign to make *Long Ago, Tomorrow* (Bryan Forbes' retitled *The Raging Moon*) into a success, spending as much on publicity—including \$45,000 to Burt Bacharach for a song which caused the title change—as he did on the film's North American rights. Rugoff has done it before, backing favourable word of mouth publicity with powerful advertising campaigns. Sometimes it works for him (*Z*); sometimes it doesn't (*The Fireman's Ball*).

Along film row, however, the feeling is that the market is too soft today for such blitzkrieg campaigns, that not every doubtful item could be saved all the time with massive publicity, and that if anything the list of unreleased pictures will remain as long as ever.

AXEL MADSEN

Pesaro 1971

For the first few days at Pesaro, art was dead, style was suspect, and the new austerity was greeted with massive walk-outs and sleep-ins. 'We're here to talk politics, not cinema,' proclaimed more than one of the decimated audience left to confer with the film-makers after each screening. Marguerite Duras was accused of betraying her political aims by revealing her fascination with cinematic form in *Jaune le Soleil*; a mysterious charge as it was arguably the most unwatchable film on show.

Pesaro, established since 1964 as a major revolutionary workshop, was right to direct attention to the new concentration on films as tools. The dominant theme, declared an introduction, was no longer 'What is cinema and how is it made?' but 'Why and for whom is cinema made?' It went on, 'If the Sixties were the decade of new cinema, the Seventies will be, or will perhaps try to be, the decade of political cinema.' But what was on the screen often looked more like amateur telly than new militancy. Moreover the new film-makers were unlucky enough to be screened alongside an admirable Oshima retrospective, which constantly demonstrated that if art had succumbed the corpse was in magnificent condition.

The disappointing posturing of most of the European films gave way to real urgency and passion only at the end of the festival with the Latin American contributions. Two were outstanding. *The Night of San Juan* is by Jorge Sanjinés, the Bolivian director of *Condor Blood*, which attracted enthusiasm at last year's festivals. His new film uses survivors and witnesses of the 1967 massacre of miners by the army to reconstruct the event, and their participation turns the film into a unique collective work. As an experience it is overwhelming; and

it suggests inexhaustible possibilities for developments in group work.

The Road Towards Death of Old Man Reales, a first film by Argentinian director Gerardo Vallejo, subsequently took the major prize at Mannheim. The story of Reales' three sons, one an itinerant sugar cane worker, one a policeman and one a trade unionist, indicates the choices confronting the Argentinian people. Such a summary must suggest a crude allegory. In fact the film is subtle, fierce and compelling. Vallejo was assistant director on *La Hora de los Hornos*, and his film reveals him to be no less of an artist than Solanas.

London has still had little hint of the extraordinary work coming out of Latin America. In Italy RAI, the state television company, is following its backing of films by Fellini, Bertolucci, Rossellini and Olmi with a whole series of features by young Latin American directors. *The Night of San Juan* is a RAI co-production, and future films will include features by the exiled Glauber Rocha, Joaquim Pedro Andrade, also from Brazil, Fernando Solanas from Argentina, Santiago Alvarez from Cuba, and Alejandro Jodorowsky from Chile.

Although two-thirds of the Western European productions at Pesaro were sponsored by television, RAI's policy is clearly far the most vigorous. True, they didn't transmit the Godard film they sponsored, *Lotte in Italia*, just as London Weekend didn't transmit *British Sounds*. And RAI's television team at Pesaro seemed a little suspicious of the festival, challenging every interviewee to explain what it had to offer the man in the street. In fact Pesaro is determinedly practical. Last year, for example, the Cuban films it introduced were circulated to thirty-five towns throughout Italy and given over three hundred screenings. The festival urges its films on distributors, subsidises attendance by film society representatives and undertakes non-theatrical distribution itself.

There was only one American film on show (Venice's introduction of a sideshow of American documentaries robbed Pesaro of a number of films they would have liked to show), *The Murder of Fred Hampton*, Mike Gray's vivid and convincing attack on the Chicago police for the killing of the chairman of the Illinois Black Panther Section. Typically it was condemned by some of the Pesaro audience as emotional rather than analytical. Gray insisted it was aimed at his mother and everyone like her who would automatically accept the police version of such events.

Three unexpected pleasures demand mention: *S.P.Q.R.*, in which Volker Koch hilariously hurls Pasolini and Ondine (the 'pope' in *Chelsea Girls*) into a lunatic stew of ancient and modern cinema; Franco Brogi Taviani's *The Substitution*, a disturbing morality set in an un-



Location in Coggeshall: Hugh and Hubert Adams. Photo Barry Sheffield

specified future; and the resurrection of the wildly funny *Happiness*, directed by Alexander Medvedkin in 1935. It was probably the last Soviet silent feature, simply because the Ministry never quite got round to sending Medvedkin his sound equipment.

DEREK HILL

Our Village Film

Not very much happens in Coggeshall, Essex. The wool trade was big in the 14th century but after that the place went down; in the 17th century we burned a witch; there was a cinema for a year or two in the 1940s; and the public convenience that was erected in 1967 made the national press because the parish council minutes on the matter dated back to 1924. In the circumstances you would have thought the natives would be quite stirred up at the thought of a film being shot in the town. But they weren't, and Mrs. West (the Secretary of the Parish Council) had to comb all the pubs on Friday night to recruit even a couple of dozen extras for the Saturday morning. Apart from Mr. West and several little Wests, there was Tommy Cheek the gardener, the septuagenarian Adams twins, Francis Baines the local author and eccentric, a couple of girl students, a collection of commuters, half a dozen other children, and Mrs. Sheffield's daily, who was a bit apprehensive because she hadn't told her husband she was going out.

The extras were called at 7.30 a.m. and shivered in any sheltered nook of the great disintegrating 14th century tithe barn which is under constant threat from the demolitionists. At eight or so the film people arrived, and their clapper-board told us (they couldn't tell us themselves because the only English any of them spoke

was 'Please' and 'Come') that the production was 'I RACCONTI DI CANTERBURY'; Regia: P.P. Pasolini. Which one, everybody wanted to know, was the director? Pastelloni? Pollitosi? Did he make a film called *La Dolce Vita*?

A large stern lady and a diminutive middle-aged man began hauling strange costumes out of a pantechicon and handing them to us now ribald rustics, eyeing us knowingly before settling on each outfit. Some of us were undressed and re-garbed a number of times before they were satisfied—often at a word from a shortish man with dark glasses (surely that couldn't be Pascaloni?). Two ladies left when told (in sign language, what's more) that they must remove all their underclothing before putting on the scratchy wool smocks; but most were game. The clothes may have appeared odd, particularly the shiny Charlie Chaplin bowlers, but the transformation was astonishing: everyone looked as natural in them and as medieval as Breughel people.

The episode seemed to be *The Pardoner's Tale*. The barn had been turned into a tavern interior in which the extras were to be roisterers. They roistered so well that Mrs. Sheffield's daily fell backwards off her stool and split her head open, but took it very well. The scene involved an actor urinating on the assembly from a balcony above. For the shots of the roisterers below, water was squirted from a plastic bottle. Between times the actor was supplied with quantities of beer and coke and tea and at intervals the extras were sent out into the wind while he did his close-ups. Bucolic wit positively flew: 'What was his name? Pissolini?'

The urinating actor was Robin Asquith whom everybody knew because he is in *Please Sir* on television; but the other English actors were all Pasolini discoveries.

Two boys told us he had found them fighting outside a pub in Brixton; another was a bricklayer's hodder whom Pasolini had seen up a ladder; a fourth was a hitchhiker who had quite misunderstood the intentions of Pasolini and his friends when they'd stopped to pick him up, and had tried to run away. (Pratelloni! He must be the one who kept sitting on the floor on a little mat with which an assistant followed him about.)

At lunchtime the wardrobe man went round with a paint brush touching up the costumes (the flesh underneath stayed dyed for weeks and the men's underpants were ruined for ever). The Coggeshall actors were impressed with the mobile canteen (steak and eggs, apple crumble and custard), but worried about the toilet arrangements—not just *where*, but *how* in these entangling garments? The Italians, led by Nino Davoli and Franco Citti, crowded into the local clothier's—astonishing the locals by deciding that Mr. Willsher's gents' wear would be the *dernier cri* back on the Via Veneto. By this time everyone had discovered a great deal about the production. On Wednesday at Layer Marney they had shot an orgy, with fifty art students from Colchester stark naked. They paid double for nudity. By this time any one of us would have been willing; but, alas, it was not required today.

After lunch the extras were reinforced by two peculiar dogs, one like a little white pig and the other with a stitched-up eye which he had lost to a rat. (The country is a wild region.) The time went on to 5 and 6 and 7 p.m. and filming lost its glamour. Everyone was exhausted except the children, who had begun playing together at 7 a.m. and continued to play to order throughout the day; and the Adams twins, who worked again

on Monday and would have been quite prepared to follow the unit on its subsequent travels to St. Osyth's and Canterbury had they been called upon to do so. As it was so late they paid us £5 apiece instead of the agreed £4, and that cheered things up. But few people had yet worked out which was Pinolini or Rolipoli or whatever his name was. Didn't he make a film here before, called *Blow-Up*?

DAVID ROBINSON

Bengal

No one refers any more to a new wave in the Bengali cinema. Its four leading directors—Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak, Mrinal Sen and Tapan Sinha—are now middle-aged. The Bengali film industry has been reduced to such financial straits, and there is so much violence even in the Tollygunge Studios, that Ray has been cutting his films in Bombay, Sinha and Sen have both been making films in Hindi, and there is talk of a large Bengali exodus to the more commercialised but comparatively more stable conditions of Bombay.

In this context, the return, after six years of drift, of Ritwik Ghatak to shoot a film on the present political situation in West Bengal (and not the more fashionable problem of East Bengal) is an act of artistic, intellectual and box-office courage; shooting the film in Calcutta requires physical courage, too. After Ray, Ghatak is one of the more internationally known Indian directors. His *Ajaantrik*, a film about a man's devotion to his vintage car, first brought him international attention at the Venice Festival in 1958. Thanks to Georges Sadoul, the film was shown in France, Belgium and Italy; in India it barely paid its way. Ghatak's three major films, a virtual trilogy on the two Bengals, Partition and the middle-class refugee, were tremendous

successes in East Bengal; and ironically enough they have become highly topical in the context of Bangla Desh, since they explore the cultural affinity of the two Bengals and the harsh economic problems common to both.

'After *Subarna Rekha* in 1965,' Ghatak says, 'it was virtual self-exile until today. The reasons for this are first personal, then financial, then a feeling of exhaustion and the realisation one had nothing new to say, and lastly my characteristic irresponsibility.' Now, from the ashes of those wasted years, Ritwik Ghatak is about to be reborn, with the autobiographical film he hopes to complete early in 1972. 'It will be absolutely political in the sense that I have no political commitments but will be showing what is going on right now in West Bengal. It will be called *Jukti Tokko Aar Goppo* (*Stories and Arguments*). The story, the scenario, the direction and the music will be mine. I will play the hero, my wife will play my wife, my son my son and my daughter my daughter. The story begins with a drunkard (me) whose wife and son are leaving him. As they leave, a young girl enters in a torn sari, the spirit of Bangla Desh. From there on, the man and the girl and a young man wander over Bengal, its industrial belt, its small towns, its forests and the city of Calcutta, until they come up against some Naxalites in a forest. Towards the end, there is a confrontation between the Naxalites and the decaying, drunken intellectual, in whom, at least momentarily, they recognise a kindred spirit, a non-conformist.'

Ghatak says this will be his most serious and his most complex film. And probably his most interesting, for it will be a self-crucifixion as well as a resurrection.

AMITA MALIK

Medieval people: Coggeshall extras in 'I Racconti di Canterbury'



1971: Obituary

DECEMBER '70: John Paddy Carstairs, British director, mainly of light comedy (*The Chiltern Hundreds*, *Up in the World*); Charles Ruggles, ubiquitous American character actor, often seen as harassed bumbler (*Charley's Aunt*, *If I Had a Million*), latterly in Disney features; Suzanne Dalbert, French-born actress brought to Hollywood by Hal Wallis (*The Accused*, *Target Unknown*); Lenore Ulric, tempestuous American supporting actress (*Camille*).

JANUARY: 'Bronco Billy' Anderson, first of the cowboy heroes (*The Great Train Robbery*), later co-founder of Essanay, for which he made hundreds of one-reel Westerns; Georges Van Parys, French composer (*Le Million*, *Casque d'Or*, *French Cancan*); John Dall, Forties leading man, one of the murderers in *Rope*; Kermit Maynard, stunt man and supporting actor, mainly in Westerns; Douglas Shearer, American pioneer of sound technique; Robert Wyler, actor, scriptwriter, producer, brother of William.

FEBRUARY: Fernandel, rubber-faced clown of French cinema; Jay C. Flippen, tough American supporting actor, often seen as cop or sheriff (*Thunder Bay*, *The Wild One*); Seth Holt, British director (*Taste of Fear*, *Station Six Sahara*); Tullio Carminati, debonair leading man, seen opposite Grace Moore in *One Night of Love*.

MARCH: Borden Chase, scriptwriter (*Red River*, *Winchester '73*); Bebe Daniels, popular star of the silent screen, and in the Fifties equally popular on radio as scatterbrained American in London; Leland Hayward, American producer (*Mister Roberts*, *Spirit of St. Louis*); Basil Dearden, British director, mainly associated with Fifties 'realism' (*The Blue Lamp*, *Sapphire*, *Victim*); Patrice Pouget, French cameraman, gave Lelouch his gloss; Harold Lloyd, bespectacled comic genius.

APRIL: Cecil Parker, veteran British character actor, usually as amiable bungler or gentlemanly rogue; Edmund Lowe, suave American actor, Quirt in *What Price Glory?*; Sergei Zakariadze, Russian actor, rumbustious peasant hero of *A Soldier's Father*; Terence de Marney, British actor, usually something sinister in the shadows; Armand Denis, friend of the animals; Lennie Hayton, musical director of some of the great musicals; Werner Peters, German heavy; Ralph Wheelwright, Marion Davies' Cosmopolitan publicist, wrote *Man of 1,000 Faces*.

MAY: Audie Murphy, star of scores of low-budget Westerns; Chips Rafferty, rangy Australian actor (*The Sundowners*); Jean Vilar, French actor and director of Théâtre National Populaire, seen in several films; Rodd Redwing, Indian actor for DeMille and tutor of many Hollywood fast guns; Alice

Tissot, veteran French actress, often as concierge (*The Italian Straw Hat*, *Ignace*); Jean d'Eaubonne, designer of *Le Sang d'un Poète*, *Le Plaisir*.

JUNE: E. V. H. Emmett, the voice behind Gaumont newsreels; Gene Gerrard, British musical comedy star of the Thirties; Piero Gherardi, Italian designer, mainly for Fellini; Michael Rennie, British leading man (*The Robe*, *Island in the Sun*), later TV's 'Third Man'; Ellaline Terris, veteran British actress; Thomas Gomez, American heavy (*Key Largo*, *Johnny O'Clock*); Walter Jurrmann, Austrian-born Hollywood composer; Herbert J. Biberman, scriptwriter and director, one of the Hollywood Ten.

JULY: Louis Armstrong, 'Satchmo' to millions; Ub Iwerks, animator of Mickey Mouse; Van Heflin, dependable American actor (*Shane*, *3.10 to Yuma*); Glenda Farrell, wise-cracking blonde of Warner films of the Thirties (*Little Caesar*, *Johnny Eager*); Alan Rawsthorne, composer (*Burma Victory*, *The Captive Heart*); Cliff Edwards, ukulele-playing singer, the voice of Jiminy Cricket; Russell E. Day, cameraman for Capra and George Stevens; Norman Reilly Raine, Thirties scriptwriter (*The Life of Emile Zola*); Sergei Nolbandov, Ealing producer.

AUGUST: Spyros P. Skouras, almost the last tycoon, president of Fox and initiator of CinemaScope; Günther Rittau, German cameraman, associate of Freund and Hoffmann; Paul Lukas, Hungarian-born American actor (*Strange Cargo*, *Watch on the Rhine*); Horace McMahon, American supporting actor, usually playing cops or gangsters; C. Denier Warren, chubby American character comedian in British films of the Thirties.

SEPTEMBER: Bella Darvi, French actress, brief Hollywood career as Zanuck protégée (*The Egyptian*); Billy Gilbert, American comic, excitable stooge for Laurel and Hardy and the Marx Bros.; Spring Byington, American actress, often played scatterbrained maternal types; Pier Angeli, Italian actress in Hollywood and Britain, never quite found the parts to match her talent (*Teresa*, *The Angry Silence*).

OCTOBER: Chester Conklin, moustachioed comic of Keystone and Sennett slapstick; Mikhail Romm, Russian director (*Lenin in October*, *Ordinary Fascism*); Linda Pini, star of Italian silent cinema; William Costello, the voice of Popeye.

NOVEMBER: Raymond Hatton, veteran American character actor, old-timer comic sidekick in scores of Westerns; Martha Vickers, Forties star (*The Big Sleep*, *Ruthless*); Paul Terry, creator of Terrytoons; Betty Bronson, silent star (*Ben Hur*, *The Singing Fool*); Gladys Cooper, indomitably aristocratic actress, seldom at her best on the screen (*The Pirate*, *Separate Tables*).

GO WEST, YOUNG MAN

Beverly Walker



Peter Fonda filming 'The Hired Hand'

It is now a cliché that the phenomenal success of *Easy Rider* in 1969 turned the American film industry upside down. The Hollywood money men suddenly began to look for new directors, with three key priorities: youth, subject matter with youth appeal, and a low budget. The powerful unions began to buckle under the tide, making unprecedented concessions. And there were three further, and significant, offshoots. 1) Established actors and producers decided that they, too, could make a movie, and rock stars turned from their frenzied audiences to the relatively more serene occupation of movie-making. 2) Record companies (Fantasy) and other well-heeled American industries (Quaker Oats) began to make money available for films. In addition, money from 'independent', often unrevealed, sources began to turn up for non-union, low budget pictures, often of the hard-sell genre variety. 3) New companies were formed to produce movies. Cannon Films got off to a good start with *Joe*, a film which appealed to the politically conservative element (though they deny that was their intention); and Donald Rugoff's Cinema V got together with Max Palevsky of Xerox to form Cinema X. While Cannon has made several films since *Joe*, Cinema X has yet, however, to get a picture into production.

Even on its knees, Hollywood remains the centre of American film production. Its residual glamour still attracts wealthy dilettantes; the two major universities (UCLA and USC), along with half a dozen other colleges, are graduating hundreds of potential producers, directors or writers every year. Many of them remain in Hollywood. It is impossible to say how many people made movies for the first time in the last eighteen months. Many were low-budget (\$60,000) films, often of a political or

documentary nature, and will never reach a wide audience. A number of new distribution companies sprang into existence (or those already formed expanded) for the purpose of distributing these and other non-commercial films to college campuses and film societies. For this reason alone, the 16 mm. market is booming.

Here, however, I am concerned with films financed in or by Hollywood, with the intention of reaching a wide audience. What follows is a brief rundown on a number of

first films made recently by new directors. Only a few of the pictures are doing well at the box-office, and several have yet to be released.

Desperate Characters, written and directed by Frank Gilroy, whose previous experience had been in theatre, and *Little Murders*, which Alan Arkin directed from Jules Feiffer's play, are the only films that deal with the horrors of city life. This seems odd, since the vast majority of America's population now lives in cities or sprawling suburbs, and the quality of city life has become a major political and social issue. *Desperate Characters* received generally good notices and is doing rather well in its initial release; *Little Murders* collected even better reviews and began well at the box-office, but failed to sustain its momentum as it was released outside the major cities. Alan Arkin was a thoroughly experienced theatre director and had already made a number of short films, so *Little Murders* has a well-made look to it. But it lacks some of the impact of the play, partly because the performances are directed towards slapstick, New York style, rather than the black farce that Feiffer had written.

Clint Eastwood formed his own Malpaso Company with Universal, for whom three of his recent films were made, and directed and starred in *Play Misty for Me*. What



'Kotch': Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau

would have been considered a 'B' movie twenty years ago is now being given a major promotional campaign and put into big theatres. (Not one movie starring Eastwood has yet lost money.) His film, which tells the story of a Lothario disc jockey terrorised by a pathological woman (Jessica Walter) with whom he had casually gone to bed one night, is chiefly notable for Miss Walter's really excellent performance and the fine photography of Bruce Surtees (son of Robert Surtees). Eastwood's direction is certainly competent, and at times better than that. The film could have done with a stronger screenplay, but it seems assured of a neat profit.

Jack Lemmon took a sizeable chance with *Kotch*, the story of an old man whose son and daughter-in-law try to move him into a 'Home for Elderly Citizens'. Although American movies have recently taken a strong turn towards nostalgia (*Summer of '42*, *The Last Picture Show*), the subject of elderly people is a sensitive one here; as well as breaking the rule of youth appeal. However, Lemmon handles the material very well, albeit in a traditional Hollywood way; and Walter Matthau's brilliant, subdued performance as the old man, successfully walking the line between comedy and pathos, seems to contain not only the best of what he has done in past films, but also the best of Lemmon's work as an actor. There is a sentimental soundtrack, but it is used with a minimum of manipulation, and the film is very touching. It opened at Radio City Music Hall and seems assured of success. *Kotch* may, in fact, turn out to be one of those rare pivotal films which again throw the studios into a tailspin. We could be in for a slew of films about old people . . .

Larry Turman produced and directed *The Marriage of a Young Stockbroker*, from the novel by Charles Webb (who wrote the book from which *The Graduate* was adapted) and a screenplay by Lorenzo Semple (*Pretty Poison*). Although he hired first-rate people—Laszlo Kovacs as cameraman, Fred Steinkamp as editor, Richard Benjamin and

Joanna Shimkus to play the couple whose marriage is threatened by the husband's voyeuristic tendencies—the movie does not quite work. It is pervaded throughout by a *déjà vu* feeling, as of *The Graduate* ten years after, and Turman was attacked by most critics for trying to cash in on that film's success.

But Turman is one of Hollywood's more interesting producers, and his career indicates that he is willing to take chances on new directors (Noel Black on *Pretty Poison*), performers (Dustin Hoffman, a complete unknown before *The Graduate*), or on commercially doubtful material (*The Great White Hope*, *Flin-Flam Man*). He is a man of considerable charm and intelligence, and also something of a paradox in Hollywood. He lives in quintessential Hollywood style but produces odd-ball movies, most of which have not been very successful commercially. (The new film, ironically, is doing rather well at the box-office.)

Turman readily acknowledges that the critical accusations of imitation hurt, though he expected them. 'I'm very attracted to Webb's characters. Someone who's kind of sad and screwed-up and it permeates his life. Finally, he has to find his own way. A lot of characters in movies I've chosen to produce were like that. I left the textile business after five years. I was very successful. Once I made the decision to get out, I made a better connection with myself. I've loved all the movies I produced, but they never quite came out the way I saw them. I never felt ready to direct until *Marriage*.'

But Turman says he was far from satisfied with his own film; once again, it didn't turn out as he envisaged it. 'In retrospect, I made two big errors. I was so emotionally connected to the material that I failed to get it on the screen. The character's voyeurism was intended as a metaphor—it was his escape, his narcotic. Anyone's emotions are often at variance with his behaviour. There were times in the picture when I was aware of the emotion, but I played too much on

the behaviour.' Also, Turman feels that his double role of producer-director affected the picture. 'I needed someone to do for me what I did for others. As a producer, I always thought of myself as a sounding board, and I used to keep the pressures off the director so that he could go on making his movie. The irony is that I've worked with first time directors. I used to say, "It doesn't matter if we go over schedule a week or so." But I didn't allow myself the same privilege. I pressured myself; I was too aware of production values.' I asked Turman if he brought in anyone whose judgment he trusted to look at the picture at any stage before turning it over to the studio (Fox). 'I had a dumb egotistical thing: I had to do it all myself. When I got away from it for a few weeks and came back and looked at it, I knew I had to make some changes and asked for a couple of weeks' time. They wouldn't allow it.'

Of the ten films directed by younger, less established men, three were made over a year ago and have yet to be released. The American Film Institute's only feature film to date is *In Pursuit of Treasure*, directed by the underground film-maker Stanton Kaye (*Brandy in the Wilderness*). The few people who have seen it—I am not one of them—say it is a strange piece about Indians being slaughtered for gold. Kaye is generally considered to be extremely talented, and the reasons for the film's non-release are unknown. He is more fortunate than most of the other newcomers, because the AFI is certainly giving him all the time he wants to experiment with the editing of the film.

Another film virtually unseen by anybody is *All-American Boy*, written and directed by Charles Eastman. From what one knows about the film, it appears to be thematically similar to *Five Easy Pieces*, written by Eastman's sister, Adrienne Joyce. Jon Voight plays the title role of a Golden Glove boxer; he has a knack with women, but is rather lost and rootless and ultimately walks away from everything, as did Bobby Dupea in *Pieces*. The production was cloaked in secrecy and no one seems to know why the film has not yet been released.

The Christian Licorice Store, the story of the rise and fall of a superstar tennis player (Beau Bridges), was directed by Jim Frawley from a script by Floyd Mutrux. Frawley directed many of the best segments of the 'Monkees' television series, and has talent and imagination. The script, however, was thin, and Frawley was under the supervision of Floyd Mutrux, who co-produced and did much of the initial editing. The film was put through the sneak preview route last year and audiences did not react favourably. Frawley then did considerable re-editing and the film was vastly improved. It has some lovely moments, particularly one in which Jean Renoir appears. If the costs of launching a picture weren't so high, it would undoubtedly have been released by now.

Floyd Mutrux made his own directorial debut with *Dusty and Sweets McGee*, one of half a dozen films dealing with the subject of narcotics. Made in Los Angeles with Bill Fraker (*Bullitt*) as cameraman, the film's cast mingles real-life addicts with a few professional actors; and Fraker's lyrical photography, counterpointing the realism

of the needles and narcotics paraphernalia, gives the film a most peculiar ambience. In his attempt to create a fictional documentary about the horrors of dope, Mutrux succeeded only in giving the movie the look of a slick rip-off, a commercial for heroin. Produced by Michael Laughlin and Mutrux, the film was sold to Warner Brothers at a tidy profit, but did not do too well at the box-office. This probably has less to do with its quality, however, than with its content. Narcotics is another sensitive subject in the United States, albeit over-exposed (mostly from television); and none of the films with this as a central theme has ever been commercially successful.

Deadhead Miles was directed by Vernon Zimmerman from a brilliant screenplay by Terry Malick, and features Alan Arkin as a zany truckdriver with a knack for getting into trouble. Zimmerman had previously made a number of experimental short films which reveal a rather unusual, quixotic sensibility. With its roots in the Theatre of the Absurd it is also rather loving and compassionate—a strange mixture. But what appeared to be an ideal combination of talents doesn't quite work on film. Malick, a Texan who studied philosophy at Cambridge, thought he was writing a down-home story about simple people (although I would disagree); Zimmerman was directing a comedy of the absurd; and Arkin was playing farce. Zimmerman wanted to edit the film himself, and did, but it was subsequently re-edited, mainly by Arkin. There was bitterness among all these people, but Paramount will be releasing the film later this year.

It is obvious, at this point, that films made by new directors have had a rough go of it. The story gets worse.

Jack Nicholson directed *Drive, He Said*, based on the novel by Jeremy Larner and scripted by Larner and Nicholson. The film was shunned at last year's Cannes Festival, reviews in the United States ranged from medium cool to vindictive, and it has been a



Karen Black in 'Drive, He Said'

commercial failure. Its multi-level story centres on a star college basketball player (William Tepper), torn in different directions. His roommate (Mike Margotta) is the campus revolutionary leader and puts him down both for toeing the athletic line of the coach (Bruce Dern) and for his affair with Olive (Karen Black), a professor's wife. The film explores the relationships among these people in a fresh way, and the performances are all good.



Tuesday Weld in 'A Safe Place'

Nicholson has a bold visual attack, using close-ups (of objects as readily as of people), zooms, fast pans, slow motion. But this is also an extremely controlled film. Its underlying theme of male camaraderie must, however, occasionally make women wince, since Nicholson has imbued all the male characters with a dignity not accorded the women. Karen Black is the only woman character of any significance; and except for two brief moments of rebellion she is shown as little more than a sexual object/mother figure. In the controversial sexual encounter between her and Tepper, she is taken from behind and the camera focuses on her face and pleasure. Tepper seems very far away, in control and uninvolved. The nightmarish attempted rape of Olive by Margotta shows her terror and dishevelment in a most unattractive and ambiguous light. One can't but sympathise with the woman-hating radical. In contrast to the men's scenes in the locker room and gymnasium, where they are close and care about each other, the women are shown cheerleading or in supermarkets. Communication between them is virtually non-existent, either ritualistic or with a man as the pivotal point.

Nicholson's film has been too elliptical for most people; and although it is supposed to be contemporary, I found myself thinking of it as a 1950s film. Nonetheless, it has integrity: it pleads no cause, plays into nobody's fantasies, and avoids manipulation. It deserved a better fate.

The most experimental film by a new director is *A Safe Place*, written and directed by Henry Jaglom. A small cabal of boozers were in turn booed at its New York Festival première, making it, rather than Peter Watkins' *Punishment Park*, the Festival's most controversial film. It's an involved, non-linear study of time and memory, in which everything is seen through the mind of the girl played by Tuesday Weld. Unable to recapture the freedom and idealism of her childhood (she says she remembers being able to fly when she was a

little girl), she also cannot free herself from its pain and thus is emotionally paralysed. She meets a magician (Orson Welles) whose conceit is that he can make things disappear. Flying, disappearing, freedom, death, converge as a metaphor for the need for something outside ourselves to provide answers to the problems of existence. Tuesday Weld's fragile innocence, the use of music as a seductive thread throughout the film, and lovely photography, all belie an undertone of despair verging on bitterness. Jaglom acknowledges that it is completely autobiographical—parts of it were filmed in the apartment where he grew up—and says that he cast Tuesday Weld because he had never met anyone more like himself.

The anti-intellectual approach of *A Safe Place* (Jaglom's attempt to convey the sense of time emotionally), together with its non-narrative structure, infuriated most of the major critics. Although I don't think the film is entirely successful, it is certainly the most daring picture made by any American director—new or otherwise—last year.

The youngest director to make his first feature in 1971 is 27-year-old Bill Norton, writer-director of *Cisco Pike*. It's the story of a down and out musician (Kris Kristofferson) who has turned to selling marijuana to earn a living; he promises his girl friend (Karen Black) that he will give it up, only to be blackmailed by a desperate policeman (Gene Hackman) into one final, frenzied weekend of dealing.

Cisco Pike is truly a Los Angeles film: its ambience could never have been attained anywhere else. The camera moves from Venice, the hippie-artist section of Los Angeles, through the freeways and into the tennis courts and houses of the rich as Cisco sells the 100 kilos of marijuana. Norton wanted to make a film showing how over-strict law enforcement (particularly affecting students and blacks) had made criminals of thousands of people. This is implicit in the film, but it is far from a polemic. On the contrary, it is a concoction of surprises (Viva providing a brief but

hilarious few moments), with Kristofferson, a popular country and western singer, giving a touching and authentic performance. Norton had his share of problems with the studio, but the final result is a good deal more hopeful than that of most of the other new directors.

Universal financed films by two new directors last year, as part of their special programme under the supervision of Ned Tanen. *Silent Running* is directed by Douglas Trumbull, the man responsible for many of the special effects in *2001*. His own film has a few, very well done, special effects, but is mainly the story of a botanist (Bruce Dern) alone on a space ship; he has been living there eight years, in charge of a government programme to grow gigantic botanical forests in space, with the expectation of eventually returning them to earth. *Silent Running* is the only one of the new films to deal with the fashionable subject of ecology; but although Trumbull shows promise as a director, he was handicapped by an indifferent script and a budget not large enough really to meet the needs of the story.

The other film financed by Universal is *The Hired Hand*, Peter Fonda's much criticised Western. I couldn't connect with the film, but its intentions were obviously serious. Fonda told me: 'I wanted to make a movie dealing with the elements—fire, rain, water, air—man and his relationship to these elements... his sense of discovery. And to explore his relationship with a woman. I wanted to do it as a Western because I think that genre is the Greek drama of America. You can use large symbols and attain a perspective that you lose in a modern 'slice of life' picture. For me, it was a symphony.'

That Fonda has good ideas for films is obvious (*Easy Rider* was his idea); but perhaps he should write his own scripts. Although I haven't read Alan Sharp's script for *The Hired Hand*, it would appear that his ideas were somewhat different from those of Fonda, and that the film suffered from the clash of different sensibilities. And although Fonda was given complete freedom by the studio while making the film, the promotional handling of it on release was incredibly poor. In the United States, one just doesn't premiere a film in Des Moines, Iowa; which is where *The Hired Hand* opened.

In an article about first films and new directors, it seemed imperative to talk as I have done about box-office and critical response. The brief renaissance following *Easy Rider* is now over. The studios have retrenched and new directors are finding it virtually impossible to get financing for a film unless they go the porn-horror-violence route. The ability of many directors to obtain finance for a second film is contingent upon box-office reaction; which in turn is strongly influenced by the critics. It is probably not off the mark to say that films mentioned in this article would long ago have been released were it not that the producers or studios know they have a flawed piece of work, and are scared of the probable critical response.

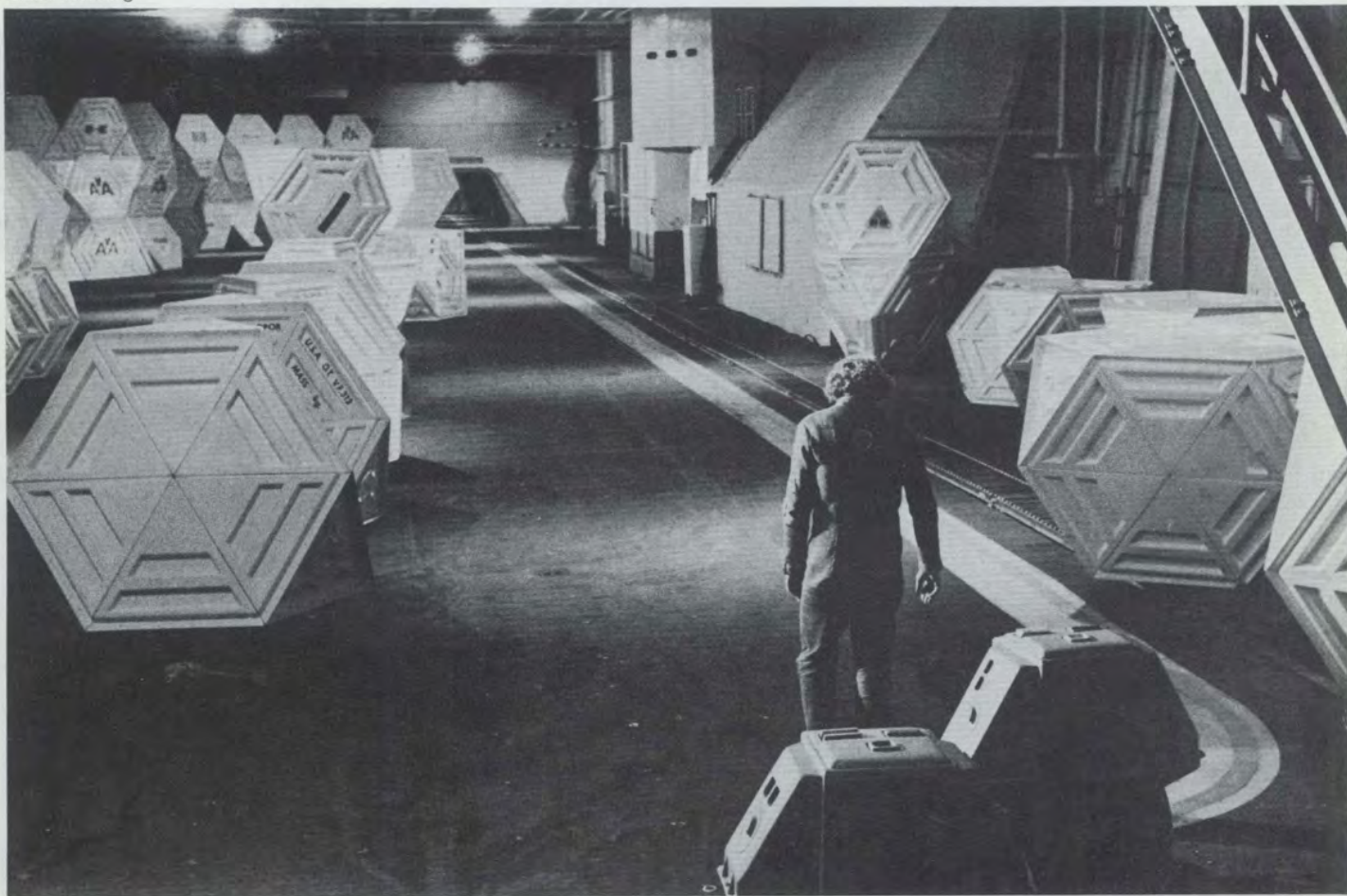
The American moviegoing public remains as capricious as ever, but the critics must take some of the responsibility for the crashing failure of many of these new films. There is in America a critical establishment, centred in New York, which has enormous influence over the fate of a film. Most films

open in New York in order to get the nationwide coverage provided by magazines and major television networks. And although many studios deny being influenced by the critics, the evidence does not support this. The amount of money allocated for promotional purposes, the number of prints made, the kind of theatre a film goes into, bears a direct relationship to the critical reaction.

New York critics are constantly crying for better, more personal American films. They are more inclined, however, to be tolerant of an uneven film from abroad than of an imperfect movie made in America. Nestor Almendros, the French cameraman, was recently accorded the honour of a full piece in the Sunday *New York Times*; he deserved it, but that same attention has not been given to any one of half-a-dozen American cinematographers who also deserve it. The general level of film criticism in America has probably never been so high. But the influence of the *auteur* theory, at first a good one, has passed the point of being constructive, or even relevant, to contemporary American film-making. The majority of the New York critics are Easterners who make only perfunctory trips to Los Angeles; they have made little attempt, unlike critics in the other arts, to familiarise themselves with the problems of the industry. The vindictive, personal attacks some of these critics have made on directors is inexcusable. If they really care about films, they should heed the advice one of them gave Jack Nicholson in a review of his film: 'For Christ's sake, look out where you're going.'

* From Robert Creeley's poem 'I Know a Man', quoted in *Drive, He Said*.

'*Silent Running*'





THE ASSASSINATION OF TROTSKY

Joseph Losey directs Alain Delon and Romy Schneider in *The Assassination of Trotsky*. Delon plays Jacques Mornard, who in 1940 murdered Trotsky in his Mexican retreat; Richard Burton is Trotsky. The script is by Nicholas Mosley, and the film is being shot in Mexico and in Rome.



When is a Dirty Film...?

David Robinson

'Trash': Joe Dallesandro, Holly Woodlawn



The Amsterdam Wet Dream Festival probably represents as fairly as possible the limits of free expression which the cinema has currently reached. Organised by the Sexual Egalitarian and Libertarian Fraternity (SELF), an offshoot of the Dutch-based *Suck* magazine, its ostensible purpose is to promote a competition, with money prizes, for erotic films of all sorts and from all sources; though its ulterior purpose is an affectionate get-together of SELF supporters. Very reliable people who were at the first Festival, in 1970, agreed convincingly that after the first couple of sessions it needed a lot of pluck to face more films of such minimal aesthetic merit. The 1971 experience was strikingly different. There was tedious, overblown and sheer bad stuff; but the proportion was less than you would expect in a major feature festival like Venice or Cannes. The Festival convincingly confirmed the now familiar assertion that as the market in what must (broadly and misleadingly) be classed as pornographic cinema becomes more and more competitive, film-makers are obliged to make their films better—in terms of conventional artistic qualities like intelligence, entertainment, human interest—rather than dirtier.

This seemed true even of the American hard-core. The main prize-winner, *School-girl*, adopted a traditional porno formula (the heroine chooses sexual mores as the theme of her community studies thesis and embarks with enthusiasm on original research), but the development showed genuine wit, a real grasp of character, even sometimes a sympathetic curiosity about the human relationships involved, for instance, in a marriage whose partners are driven to seek the catalyst of a third party to stimulate declining sexual interest. *Confessions of a Male Groupie*, directed by Tom de Simone and Nick Grippo, although in a necessarily limited way, quite conscientiously and sympathetically examined homosexuality in the hippy and drop-out scene, and revealed moments of perceptive fantasy in the depiction of a faggots' moll, gross, greedy, yet as eager as the rest of us to be loved and to love.

There were inevitably representatives of that most equivocal of genres, films which while purporting to offer serious documentation of pornography and sexuality quite frankly themselves exploit the commercial appeal of the subject. The voyeurist hypocrisy of the style was most evident in *Sub Rosa Rising*, an eager exposé of the sexual activity of San Francisco, directed by Jerry Abrams. *Room Service* could be forgiven much for its anthology of old pornographic films dating back to the Twenties, and revealing how little innovation or variation in presentation there has been in the years between. Ole Ege's *Pornographie* was on a different level again: calculated pornography, a collage of erotic facts and fantasies (varied pick-up techniques; a group of ladies merrily and compulsively exchanging clothes faster and faster) which did not disdain humour and even an occasional lyrical touch.

Inevitably, the worst and the best of the films were to be found among the private and independently produced work. Not all depended upon direct erotic pictorialisation. There was a group of brilliant little essays by the American Sebastian Stewart, for

instance, which devised highly erotic images out of the simple depiction of a hand squeezing a balloon, a car going through a wash, a golf ball disintegrating in stop-action. Len Richmond's *Moist Dream* (made at Berkeley) was also a piece of inspired animation, making original use of graphic sources rarely explored by film-makers, for instance the compelling perspectives of sixteenth and seventeenth century architectural prints.

Animation can be more aggressive: Siegfried Claude's *Snow White and the Seven Lovers* (now arrived at the second of its intended twelve parts) relates its story in animation which is close enough to Disney for parody but far enough away to permit its ribald sexual images the energy of oriental erotic painting. However startling it is to see the lovable dwarfs as horrid little satyrs with vast and insatiable phalli, Snow White as a nymphomaniac and Prince Charming as a necrophiliac, there does seem a certain moral purpose in exposing the darker side of folk and fairy lore. Nor is there any doubt of the fanatical moral intent of Lon van Keulen's *Meat Eater's Madness*, which adopts a style strongly reminiscent of *Un Chien Andalou* and uses repellent sexual images (a lady feeding her vagina with sliced cooked meats, a man making a penis sandwich) for the purpose of an angry vegetarian tract.

One of the prize-winners was *Hot Pants* by Peter de Rome, an English underground film-maker working in America. De Rome's work is especially noteworthy. Entirely personal, never until now shown or intended to be shown publicly, it has nothing in common with any ordinary notions of pornography or obscenity, but represents the work of an extremely able, instinctual, private film-maker who has chosen to work—almost incidentally it would seem—entirely in sexual themes and images. The best of his films have a strongly romantic and idealistic tendency—*Encounter*, in which a group of strangers meet and make contact entirely through tactile discovery of one another (this was shot as *ciné-vérité*); *Exposure*, a rather complex study of a young man's erotic attraction to his own alter ego; *Fire Island Kids*, an exhilarated, utterly imprudent portrait of sexual affection (again actuality: the lovers asked that their infatuation should be recorded). Technically the films (others are *Second Coming*, *Help Wanted*, *Moules*, and all are shot on Super 8 mm.) have unusual assurance and fluidity; the content is marked by a warmth and delight in the people and their smiles and their pleasures, qualities quite alien to the hard stuff of commercial porn. De Rome's films deserve to be seen; but the factual content of their images is such that no existing censorship body is likely to approve them.

Here at Amsterdam, one might suppose, was ample matter against which to try definitions of obscenity, to assess the potential to deprave, corrupt, offend or arouse prurient and lewd thoughts, of the strongest cinema fare currently available.

'It's never the chap making the complaint who is being depraved or corrupted,' said one of the *Oz* Counsel. 'It's never Counsel who has to deal with the case who is depraved or corrupted. It's never the jurors

who are depraved or corrupted by looking at it. It's him over there. It's always some other person who has been affected.' Perhaps one reason is that it is simply more difficult to explore your own reactions than to guess at those of others. But trying frankly to judge the effect of the Wet Dream Festival on myself, I cannot pretend to any impression of being affronted, sullied, debauched, over-stimulated or driven into the streets of Amsterdam to emulate the happenings on the screen. I was not repelled, except perhaps by a French commercial adaptation of de Sade's *Justine*. Nor was I bored by graphic exposition of sex. Even though the representation of sexual behaviour can rouse to anger when it is truly obscene—exploiting sex, making it ugly or vulgar for the sake of profit—I mistrust either the veracity or the health of anyone who alleges that he is bored with any form of its representation (as the suaver members of the Longford Sex Safari were inclined to do).

To continue for a moment more these personal impressions, I even suspected a positively beneficial result from the experience. Perhaps only temporarily, I felt genuinely closer to my fellows, less puzzled by them, less afraid of them, able to talk to them more easily; more aware of the bodies, the feelings, the emotions we had in common. Any such therapy was genuinely unsought. I went to Amsterdam professionally, a bit shamefaced, and certainly sceptical. Of course these reactions to the Amsterdam experience may be the hallucinations of someone who actually has been depraved and corrupted. There is no sure way out of the chicken-and-egg dilemma of it all. How can we ever judge if something is depraving and corrupting if the judge himself is vulnerable to the effects, exposed to being corrupted and depraved and so unfitted to judge?

Yet I would like to think that my responses were those of a still clear and independent judgment. And in that judgment I am bound to say that though I found much in the Amsterdam programme that was

Peter de Rome's 'Fire Island Kids'



pornographic in the basic dictionary sense of the word, I found nothing obscene either in the dictionary definition ('offensive to modesty or decency; expressing or suggesting lewd thoughts') or in the legal meaning of the term:

An article shall be deemed to be obscene if, taken as a whole, persons shall be corrupted or depraved by it if they see it, hear it, or read it.

(British definition as stated by Judge Argyle in the *Oz* trial)

Whether to the average person, applying community standards, the dominant theme of the material taken as a whole appeals to prurient interests.

(U.S. legal test as restated in *U.S. v. Roth*, 1957)

Equally I know that Mrs. Whitehouse or Malcolm Muggeridge, most of my aunts, and perhaps even a majority of intelligent people, would find practically every one of the films (except *perhaps*, oddly enough, the *Justine*, whose ugliness was not in identifiable, factual representation) deeply shocking; and would honestly assert their power to affront, to corrupt, to deprave, to appeal to prurient interests. And this does not prove anything one way or the other about the films; or make me less or more moral or responsible or insensitive than the other people. All it demonstrates is how deeply subjective is any evaluation of obscenity. Indeed to the extent that the most wilful and ill-intentioned attempt to arouse prurient excitement must always fail of its effect in the case of some individuals, it is reasonable to assert that obscenity is entirely a matter of subjective evaluation, is *always* in the eye of the beholder. It is this factor which explains the difficulties of rational discussion of obscenity and of arriving at or demonstrating a legal definition, and the degree of emotion that enters any such debate as the *Oz* trial.

As an extreme example of this subjectivity, the Festival of Light cites as an instance of obscenity promoted by the media (along with *Oh! Calcutta!*, *Myra Breckinridge*, *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls* and *The Devils*) a schools sex hygiene programme which 'told the listening children that [masturbation] was perfectly normal, and that even the most "repressed" people were sexual privately. Masturbation was still generally regarded as taboo, which was a mistake.' Now this statement, which is thus surprisingly but deeply shocking to some people, would seem to others only a simple and useful piece of information. The difference is between those who think it proper to conceal or to reveal a fact. Obscenity in fact is conditioned only by degrees of taboo or secrecy. This is most readily seen in language. Change a single letter of the words *luck* and *hunt* and they acquire a magical, emotive and alarming character which has nevertheless been given to them only by a convention of taboo and disuse. Similarly, it is only the convention not to discuss or to see certain sexual matters and scenes which makes them 'obscene' when they are revealed or spoken about. ('While filth was revealed in the past,' expostulated the Festival of Light, 'it was done surreptitiously. Now it is being shown openly as being "normal".') Perhaps this idea of revealing the occult may be some explanation

of the obscure etymological origin in Latin of the word *obscene*. It is not accidental of course that it is also the guilt and secrecy surrounding it that has given much of the deeper (and often more perilous) pleasures and fascination to sex. Revelation disrupts the pleasures of sin as well as the taboos.

This factor, the direct relationship of taboo and obscenity (which can only be strictly applied in the area of sexual matter), is familiar enough to seem like a truism. But in the current climate, where the Wet Dream Festival and the Festival of Light co-exist (perhaps in ignorance of one another) it acquires a greater significance. Again it has become a truism that in the past, when community standards within our society had some sort of unity and coherence, standards and definitions of obscenity also seemed a little clearer. Today, when there is no longer a single standard, when the attitudes and the modes of social communication of different generations—and other distinct social groups—are widely dissimilar, a definition of obscenity becomes almost impossible. What different moral vistas appear in the eyes of different beholders was revealed most startlingly in the *Oz* trial, where the matter which so distressed the court was the product of the very infants whom society is ostensibly most deeply concerned to protect.

What results from this situation is a potentially dangerous disorientation and

'The Devils' and the backlash



disorganisation of that machinery which society has built up for protection of (what the American lawyers call) 'community standards'. Where there are no identifiable community standards, because the community is divided—'polarised' is the current term—the danger is that some arbitrary standard may be applied, which will ignore—even repress—the standards of significant sectors of the community. And already we may be seeing the results of this process in present and practical terms.

The voice of the 'Backlash' (a significantly violent word) has always been with us. Longfords there have been since the dawn of civilisation, and Mrs. Whitehouse has been with us for a good fifteen years. But through most of the last decade, with the liberalisation most dramatically signalled by the Trial of Lady Chatterley, they must have felt that they were crying in the wilderness. Now, however, with an evident and inevitable popular reaction against too much freedom of expression, the Backlash find (to change the metaphor) that they are going with the tide; and the Festival of Light has the inspiration of a no longer mythical silent majority as well as that of the Lord. A lot of decent, unthinking citizens see in them the champions of order and wholesome national values. So the threats of the Festival of Light in the area of the cinema must be taken very seriously.

The Festival urges the Government: 'To set up a Film Council independent of the film industry so as to secure more effective control of the suitability of films for public exhibition than is at present provided.' Peter Thompson, one of the activists, urges supporters to press M.P.s to support this idea. 'The next thing is to approach your local councils. You may have heard of my attempts to get Ken Russell's film *The Devils* off the London screens because of its blasphemy, obscenity and repugnant taste. Get your local councils to bann (*sic*) films like *The Devils*; engage your local councils to set up special committees to look at all films with 'X' certificates passed by the British Board of Film Censors like they do at Southend.' And, indeed, *The Devils* has already been banned by some local authorities.

The courts, the ultimate sanction against 'obscenity', have apparently been stiffened by, or are part of, the same atmosphere. The *Oz* trial was a bad trial; but the sense of the appeal judgment was unequivocal, a distinctly pyrrhic victory for liberalism. The appeal court's confirmation that prison sentences were proper to this kind of 'offence' evidenced a hardening legal attitude; the (doubtful) ruling that expert evidence would no longer be acceptable upholds the emotional approach to evaluations of obscenity against any attempts at rationalisation, however vain these may be in so subjective an area.

The British Board of Film Censors still operates as a self-regulating body to protect the industry from other criticism, other censorship; and of its nature is less inclined to judge on definitive moral grounds than to attempt to reflect a supposed 'community standard'—which is inevitably a majority standard, with all that implies. In a recent article in *SIGHT AND SOUND* I suggested the

extent to which the Trevelyan era of progressive liberalisation of film censorship was rarely a result of the Board's spontaneous urge, but was at every point conditioned by—was in the wake of, even—current social climates. Stephen Murphy has arrived in office at a critical juncture, when the tide of permissiveness may have turned; and it will not necessarily reflect his own temperament if the BBFC now comes to seem more restrictive. So far the actual figures have not reflected any tightening up:

Year	Films submitted to the Board	'X' Certificates	Rejected
1970	500	212 (98 cut)	23
1971 (to Oct. 31)	396	184 (90 cut)	17

(These statistics must be read as reflecting the rapid increase in the outspokenness of films submitted to the Board. 'We had hoped that putting up the 'X' certificate age limit to 18 would make it possible to reject or cut less; but the films have got tougher,' says Mr. Murphy.)

Yet the *Trash* decision is an unnerving portent. Here is a film which seems to a majority of those who have seen it one of the most artistically and socially substantial films to have come out of the underground, with far less potentially 'offensive' matter than *Flesh*; and an uncompromisingly moral film to boot. The only apparent reason for the refusal of a certificate was that the film (while attacking hard drugs) 'did not condemn soft drugs'. The GLC, which the BBFC has always welcomed as a local court of appeal, taking some of the onus off themselves, has also refused to license *Trash*.

The way seems clear and the portents favourable, then, for a more restrictive censorship, a less tolerant interpretation of the subjective concept of 'obscenity'. In an essentially kindly and easygoing society like ours, censorship, whatever form it takes, makes persuasive appeals. Of course we all agree that children must be protected; of course we have a responsibility to the weakest member of the community (though if we consistently made a rule of adapting social standards to the youngest and weakest we might find ourselves in a strange state). But once censorship exists there is no clear line of demarcation between that which is protective and that which is repressive. I may not like *The Devils*, but I would defend to the death Ken Russell's right to make it and have it shown, and Mrs. Whitehouse's and my right to see it, and if we will to hate.

This essay has wandered I find a tortuous path to bring it from sexual libertarianism in Amsterdam to the perils of the backlash here at home; though I believe the two phenomena are mutually illuminating. It has considered only the theme of sexuality, which is perhaps the least important and most discussed aspect of obscenity. It leaves aside such matters as the obscenity of violence, which is clearly much more perilous, because more attritive and less easily identified. The considerations remain the same: we have always to be watchful that we do not forfeit freedom for want of paying the price and running the risks that it involves; that we do not neglect to watch our watchdogs.

LONDON FESTIVAL 71



Philip Trevelyan's 'The Moon and the Sledgehammer'

Forty-five films from twenty countries in the 1971 London Festival. Quantity doesn't necessarily mean quality, and inevitably there was some dead wood, not all of it in the innovatory new directors section. But as usual there were confirmations (Olmi, Bresson, Oshima, Jancsó) and revelations (Monte Hellman, Zanussi's *Family Life*, the astonishing *Days of Water* from Cuba) as well as disappointments. The films we have chosen to review are necessarily only a selection. Many of the films have been reviewed from European festivals; a few have already opened in London and are reviewed elsewhere in this issue; others are due to open and will be reviewed when they do. (Oshima's *The Ceremony*, for one, will need a closer look outside the rather claustrophobic atmosphere of a festival.)

With more films than ever jostling for attention, it ought to have been easier to detect emergent international trends. In fact, the one certainty revealed by the 1971 festival is that trend-spotting is yesterday's game. If there were any discernible pointers, they only confirmed what we already know: that there is an increasingly uncompromising political commitment abroad in the cinema, and that the vanguard of this movement is in the films of the Third World. In general, though, diversification was the

keynote. As Godard observed in *Vent d'Est*, the cinema is at the crossroads; many filmmakers seem to be going their own way, often without the benefit of other people's maps. Which is as it should be.

Paul Morrissey/Trash

At first sight *Trash* is unmistakably a very good film; reseen, it has sections at least when it looks like a great film. What it takes on along the way is subtlety and density; far from being improvisatory and hit-or-miss, like most of the films by the Warhol group, it proves on examination to be, like *Flesh*, very tightly plotted, scrupulously constructed to make even the smallest passing comment pull its weight in the overall dramatic argument. In this the two films are defiantly the work of Paul Morrissey, who emerges in them from a period of anonymity as general cinematic odd-job man of the Warhol factory to make films which are not only highly personal but in several vital respects the antithesis of Warhol's theorising about the *gratuit*, impersonality in filmmaking, and the beyond boredom principle.

The true subject of *Trash* is presented neatly, as a sort of formal statement of theme, in the opening sequence, during

which Geri Miller (the girl who was considering having her breasts inflated with silicone in *Flesh*, and has now apparently done so) tries everything she can think of to excite Joe Dallesandro, who remains resolutely, and not too concernedly, as unaroused by her manipulation as by her elaborate go-go dance. Geri is worried in an almost maternal fashion about Joe; the trouble, she says, is the drugs he takes. Why can't he trip on sex instead: it's cheaper, nicer and a lot healthier. Can you trip on sex? asks Joe. Of course, says Geri; isn't it great when you come? No, says Joe; it's over.

The comment resounds through the rest of the film, one way and another. Behind practically everything that happens and is said there is a quiet, almost suppressed anguish over the evanescence of experience, the search for something that lasts, and the retreat, most evidently in Joe's case, into drugs as a deadener, as something which, in removing the desire for everything more lasting than the next fix, removes also any capacity, physical or mental, to do or experience anything else. (In this respect, incidentally, the film should be, from the censors' point of view, one of the most evidently moral and improving on the subject of drugs; and their arguments for refusing it a certificate, based almost



Jancsó landscape in 'Agnus Dei'

entirely on its drug aspects, seem more than usually ludicrous, indeed totally incomprehensible.)

In each of the major sequences of the film the themes stated at the opening are restated with variations. In all of them the basic situation is that characteristic preoccupation of the Warhol group, first clearly presented in *My Hustler*, the way that apparent communication often shows itself when examined to be merely the bouncing of one's own feelings off someone else who happens to be around at the time. In this case, because of his complete impotence, in every sense of the word, Joe is the sounding-board for other people's fantasies. There is the crazy lady who carries round a bag full of toys and is searching desperately for LSD, which she is against all reason convinced Joe must have concealed somewhere on his person. There is the rich young wife who finds Joe trying half-heartedly to burgle her nearly empty apartment and nurtures hopeless fantasies of rape. There is even the man from the Welfare who does not really connect with anyone else at all, pursuing relentlessly his fantasy of the silver Joan-Crawford shoes and their self-evident suitability for conversion into a chic and unusual lamp.

But above all there is Holly Woodlawn. Holly, needless to say, is one of the Warhol drag queens. And it really is needless to explain: first time round one may be intrigued at the outset by the problem of what exactly she is, but before long one accepts completely that she is what she says she is, a woman. It does not matter what she was born as and may still, for all we know, anatomically be. She is a woman giving a performance, and a performance which is by any standards mesmeric. Apart from Joe, she is the only recurrent character in the film; he shares a room with her, and is the object of her concern and often exasperated, resentful affection. We see her gathering junk, with and without Joe's assistance, and in a very funny, very sad scene in the first half setting about seducing a high-school lad who is desperately eager to establish his own complete sophistication and has been dumb enough to think he can buy some grass from Holly (which is not what he gets at all).

The character gradually builds, though,

and comes into her own in the final scenes, when her sister's pregnancy gives her the idea that she and Joe will impose on the Welfare as parents-to-be. Unfortunately she comes home one day to find Joe attempting (ineffectually, of course) to ball her sister, and launches into a really great scene of entirely illogical recrimination. After which comes the terribly funny scene with the man from the Welfare, broken up finally when the cushion she has stuffed under her sweater drops out in a moment of mobile fury. She and Joe are left exactly where they were at the start, with no money, no prospects, and no chance of communication even on the most elementary, physical level; yet, for however much or little it may count, with each other.

It is in these final scenes that the point of Morrissey's method really shows itself: they resume and pull together the film and build dizzily to a succession of climaxes, and to the final anti-climax, with complete certainty and economy. In them Joe is, as he has been established, the still, dead centre round which other people's passions revolve, while Holly is the dynamic element. And while what she says and does is often fiercely funny, she does bit by bit acquire her own dignity. Morrissey's treatment of her is masterly. How far what he elicits from her is properly speaking a performance could be argued at length, quite fruitlessly; what we get is what nearly all cinema ultimately is, the physical embodiment of private dreams. And it works here so immaculately because the people are so scrupulously respected in their quite possibly crazy integrity.

Paul Morrissey's is a cinema of complete human acceptance: however odd the characters are, they are never patronised, never made fun of, never presented as material for a quick camp giggle. The angle of regard is the most important thing in *Flesh and Trash*; the fact that the technique is in its own way stunning seems pretty incidental. Indeed, essentially it is incidental—Morrissey belongs to that select band who make films in such a way that the film becomes a transparent envelope, through which we can enter, telepathically, their minds. And the experience is, as they say these days, mind-blowing.

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

Jancsó/Agnus Dei and La Pacifista

The two Jancsó films in the London Festival are extraordinary. Individually, as it were back to back, they show a single sensibility grappling at full nervous pitch, and in the difficult country of the symbolic and the extreme, with problems of the violent mind, the fanaticism which has short-circuited connections between means and ends. But set the films face to face, and they reflect not mirror images of each other, but the different cultures and landscapes and attitudes of their settings. The Hungarian Jancsó of *Agnus Dei* and the Italianate Jancsó of *La Pacifista*: two minds, one could say, with but a single theme.

Agnus Dei is at once the more familiar (on the surface) and the more deeply inaccessible of the two films. Its setting is that empty, immutable Hungarian plain: a land of sheep-cotes and ranch-like homesteads, with a river flowing by. As in *The Red and the White*, this particular corner of the plain is occupied in turn by rival forces, horsemen of another political colour riding into shot to hunt down the troops seemingly in possession. And as in *Confrontation*, Jancsó uses songs, dances, banners, the movement across the screen of the victors and the betrayed, to motivate the choreography of his direction. The camera endlessly tracks and circles, in the longest of Jancsó's long takes: it would be fascinating, one feels, to see aerial photographs of the sad Jancsó plain, with the patterns and contours of the camera movements traced across them.

The first shot is of a naked girl leading a horse out of the river. Already, one might think, it is almost too quintessentially Jancsó. The girl pulls on her clothes and is revealed as a member of the Red forces (the year is 1919, when Horthy defeated the short-lived Republic of Councils). Briefly, the Reds are on top, in that oscillating pattern of forces. They have taken among their prisoners an epileptic priest, a man harried by violence, a dangerous dreamer of lurid scriptural texts. The Red officer shoots himself (one supposes) offscreen, recognising the inevitability of defeat, and a boy trooper is left to be shot down in his tracks by the rival force. Men run with smoke torches, and the open plain and orchard blur in a fog of apprehension and mystification. Jancsó, one realises, is not repeating himself, and this is not the mental landscape of *The Red and the White*. He is going further; restaging, as the Hungarian critic László Nagy suggests, a kind of timeless mystery, a study of the continuity of unreason after the form of a miracle play.

Specifically, Jancsó links fanaticism with epilepsy—with the reality or the faking, at least, of hysterical possession. The 'good' priest wears the rosette of the Red forces on his cassock, and is shot down in a final confrontation with the church more than militant; the epileptic priest, who follows each attack with a sudden (presumably purging?) dash for the clean and flowing water, passes on his power and his sickness to a smiling young soldier (Daniel Olbrychski). From the dispassionate exchange of cruelties—the implacable assassinations, the strippings and kneelings, the extraordinary scene of a burial among the haystacks—the film passes through

the dancing celebration of a white, religious victory into the oppressive and mysterious country where Olbrychski, a demonic, grinning Pied Piper with a violin, leads his flock into a wilderness of graves, funeral fires, the smoke of unreason.

'This tormenting, heavy, repulsively eccentric film . . . at first sight . . . ' writes Nagy. The total lucidity, dispassion and objectivity of the shooting style neither masks the torments nor elucidates the mysteries. And *Agnus Dei* seems to me a work at once hermetic and dauntingly difficult; its allusions drawn from Hungarian history and from Catholic ritual, the secrets of its power guarded, its baffling details fretting at the mind. For Jancsó, as for other mesmerising directors, the essence is that the spell must be total: there should be no rule outside the film to which one can apply, no laws but those which the characters unhesitatingly obey. I respect *Agnus Dei*, and until the arrival of Olbrychski I think I follow it; from that point on, the inadmissible questions take over.

La Pacifista enters another world: the world of admitted doubts and questions. Monica Vitti plays an enquiring TV journalist, a frightened, thinking reed, bending and swaying in a city of mysterious and hostile forces. Student crowds run through the streets, mindlessly chanting; a small group of fanatical extremists, reactionaries of violence, trouble her days and nights; the police stand by, bureaucratic and faceless men. The effect is not merely that Jancsó has made a film in Italy with Monica Vitti. It is as though, like so many of us, he had been haunted by that apocalyptic last sequence of *The Eclipse*, had added the effects of almost a decade of extremism and violence, and come out on the far side with this film: Antonioni through his looking glass.

In the confined spaces of the city, amid the columns and arcades and behind the Japanese blinds of the heroine's little bungalow, echoing with the traffic of the street, the Jancsó style changes. The sinuous long takes belong on the open plain; here we are focused on the nervous sensibility of an actress, and the trace elements of Antonioni, always present in Jancsó's style, become dominant. (The cameraman, incidentally, is Carlo Di Palma.) There are echoes, which must be entirely deliberate, of both *The Eclipse* and *Red Desert*—not pastiche Antonioni, but a powerful and fascinating transfusion. And there are no less striking overlaps with *Agnus Dei*: the link of epilepsy with cold fanatical violence (in the person of the same actor, Olbrychski), and the appearance at the end of a running figure with another smoke-torch.

La Pacifista, like *Agnus Dei*, is a perplexed film, sprinkled with clues and puzzles and unanswered questions. (A red rose, a naked girl in a shop-window . . .) The mysterious stranger (Pierre Clementi, the inescapable actor for this role) appears to take brief possession of the girl's life; and to play Russian roulette for his own before being dispatched by the blank Jancsó bullet. The impersonal, ritual violence of the Hungarian plain is here the swift karate chop to the back of the neck in the unconcerned street. At the end, abandoned by the police and with the students chanting at the gate, the pacifist heroine finds herself in a quiet medieval courtyard, shooting to kill. A final

quotation comes up like thunder (or Godard) 'My liberty is that of others'. In these two worried, worrying films, Jancsó is sounding the most deep-running threats to that liberty, not only as a Hungarian artist but as a European.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

Walerian Borowczyk/Blanche

Perhaps, given the astonishing lack of comprehension which greeted *Goto* in this country—and seems likely to exile *Blanche* for ever after the Festival—both films should always be preceded by a screening of *Diptych*, the short which is virtually a primer to Borowczyk's method. It is composed of two sequences: one in dull monochrome, an intimation of desiccation and decay as we watch a peasant, unmarried, unintelligible, nearly a hundred years old, dodder slowly about his daily routine; the other in full, rapturous colour, a vision of exquisite but inhuman beauty comprising vases of flowers, a kitten playing with a ball of wool.

The two panels are entirely separate, but they are only the visible tip of the iceberg. Underneath, mysteriously connecting the two and heralded by an aria from Massenet, is a great block of passion casting its mantle of regret over a world in which humanity and beauty are destined never to meet, never to shade each other's extremes to create what would be a harmony of the spheres.

The application to *Goto* is obvious, since its characters, born to a world of bleak cruelty, scurry about their sordid business, reaching out like blind insects after an impossible dream of beauty, and dying trapped in the grey mire of their lives. Borowczyk studies them with the clinical interest of an entomologist—literally, since he pins them against walls, windows, spyholes and doorways like so many drawing-boards—but never with the amused detachment of a Buñuel. Pulling them apart to see what makes them go on living, he discovers with tender amazement this persistent,

hopeless quest for a chimera. And when the Handel organ music pours over the tragic finale, weeping for the dead and mourning the living but also alive with hope, the voice is Borowczyk's, in a love begotten by despair upon impossibility.

Blanche is a variation on the theme with two important differences: the diptych is now a single panel comprising both the mire and the beauty, the despair and the impossibility; and it is set far back in time from what has hitherto been Borowczyk's favourite period, an indeterminate turn-of-the-century world of faded daguerrotypes and distant memories. We are now in a glacial 13th century, remote from all echoes of nostalgia and where even the music cascades coolly over the tragedy with a nonchalance far removed from Handel's proud celebration. And yet the same emotional miracle occurs. The girl may be a wilting ninny, her husband a foolish old bore, her lover a handsome tailor's dummy, and the King and Page (who provoke the old man's suspicions and terrible revenge merely to satisfy an idle moment) little more than an old lecher and a prancing peacock, but each of them transcends himself in the face of tragedy—to die well, to serve the cause of innocence or of justice, each according to his light. And one is left, cruelties and stupidities forgotten, with a troubadour's song as pure and awe-inspiring as Bérout's *Roman de Tristan et Iseut*.

Partly this is because Borowczyk again approaches his subject as an entomologist, first viewing his castle as a forbidding mass looming in a dark forest of green, then breaking it down into a warren of slits and hatchways, low portals and bolt-holes, each framing a watching or spying face. At the beginning of the film one rarely seems to see a full face or figure, sometimes because Borowczyk masks them in frames of masonry, sometimes because he deliberately suspends our vision, as in *Blanche*'s first appearance at the ball (in effect her first appearance in the film), when we see her framed tightly in a low archway as though coyly hovering, then (another shot, of her feet) realise that her

Ligia Branice in 'Blanche'



path is blocked by a huge dog. The two-part shot is not tautological. It establishes two aspects of Blanche's nature, coy flirtation and innocent timidity, neither of them her essential self but each contributing to the tragic misunderstanding; it is also, given the strange alliance between humans and animals in Borowczyk films, a tacit warning by the dog not to enter; and it is the first intimation that each of these segments, these detached fragments of the castle, is a cage in which the characters are isolated as securely as the page walled up in Blanche's room. And in these cages, created by their own blind follies, the characters flutter helplessly, unable to reveal their true selves until it is too late.

More particularly, though, it is because the drawing-boards of *Goto* have become the leaves of an illuminated manuscript, painted in delicate shadings of gold leaf and pale russets, browns, greens. The ugly posturing of the characters, set amid the achingly beautiful forests, and the Gothic mysteries of the castle which suddenly turn dark with horsemen as the final treachery is discovered, reveals the same dichotomy as *Diptych*; and leaves one with the same despairing regret for what might have been.

TOM MILNE

Manuel Octavio Gomez/ Days of Water

Superman meets the Virgin Mary in *Days of Water*, and both are shot down by the guns of revolution. With them fall Disneyland and Coca Cola, the political demagogue and the commercial charlatan, the decadence of the few and the disillusionment of the masses, all swept aside in a cathartic frenzy of destruction. In the orgiastic climax of this astonishing Cuban film, the blood of politics mingles with the red of a rose which a dying peasant saint clutches to her breast; religion and capitalism, twin bastions of centuries of exploitation, die together as the screen fills with red.

Days of Water is a carnival, and as befits a carnival the finale stops the show. But long before the end, the eye has been dazzled by the spectacle, the sideshows as well as the big parade. Like the films of Glauber Rocha, this Cuban extravaganza shows the way to revolution in terms of mass culture. The violence of political upheaval on this scale is implicit in the heritage of black African ritual and Spanish Catholic ceremonial from which Cuban popular art takes its roots. And in the process the faded cardboard totems (and in the film they are just that) of an alien, North American culture are obliterated. What remains is all that is vital from a legacy almost destroyed by the corrosive influence of Church and State. It is an act of purification, an exorcism of black god and white devil performed not with water but with blood.

The metaphor is implied by the way Manuel Octavio Gomez (*La Primera Carga al Machete*) has structured his film round the character of a peasant miracle worker whose own act of purification is to sprinkle water on the heads of the sick. The film begins in 1936 with a journalistic inquiry (appropriately, since the character is based on a documented case of a visionary healer) into a woman, Antonia Izquierdo, who claims the power of healing after a visitation from the Virgin. The journalist

is sceptical but impressed by Antonia's uncorrupted innocence; and this is his role throughout the film, an uncommitted commentator on the sidelines. The history of this peasant saint is also the history of pre-revolutionary Cuba, presented as a collage of fact and fantasy which incorporates—with an imaginative force which frequently takes the breath away—both the style and the content of Cuban popular art.

Antonia's healing water unleashes a flood tide of irrationalism. Peasants flock to her shrine, and the more phoney her miracles the more fanatic their belief in her as an incarnation of divine will. Inexorably, fanaticism breeds exploitation; private and public opportunism batten off her innocence as Antonia's sanctuary is turned into a circus. A title announces the gospel according to Toni, and there follows a celebration of Antonia's vision conjured up by this commercial charlatan like some magical hybrid of folklore and Hollywood camp. Antonia descends from a forest Heaven of gaudy tinsel to dispense her manna to a mid-summer night's dream of Bacchic revellers, an inferno of the sick and the sinners. The fantasy, it turns out, is not far removed from the fact, as gibbering peasants surge round Antonia and her shrine burgeons with the tawdry paraphernalia of religious hysteria. The hysteria of the people is soon matched by the mania of the State, which sees in this woman touched by grace a dangerous magnet of discontent. She is publicly denounced, in a speech of paranoid invective; and privately reviled, by a chemist who harangues the press from behind lifesize cardboard ads for patent medicines.

The style here arises out of the content. The camera, often hand-held, swoops and zooms and snakes through the crowds with frenetic abandon; the gaudy carnival of Antonia's ritual is echoed by the manifestations of a sanctioned religious excess,

church interiors bathed in sickly coloured spotlights as priests take the pulpit to pillory this subversive popular threat to their decadent establishment. The precarious balance of primitive ritual and Catholic pageant is succinctly illustrated in a head-on processional clash of African drums and Christian effigies. And the disintegrating marriage of Church and State is devastatingly exposed in the progressively frantic style which Gomez uses to describe Antonia's exploitation in the political arena.

The State frames Antonia on a murder charge; she is to be sacrificed on the crumbling altar of morality. A lawyer sees the political capital to be made out of a martyr, and swoops to power on the wings of mass hysteria. Antonia is now a battered doll manipulated by a cynical puppeteer, a point beautifully made when the journalist interviews the lawyer ('I defend the rights of those who have nothing') and 'My Blue Heaven' grates from a gramophone. Antonia is witness to a political massacre, shot like some Hawaiian gangster movie; and when she refuses to play the game, the political machine destroys her. The peasants who have seen in her the symbol of their own exploitation are slaughtered by an army which is nowhere daunted by Antonia's holy water. Except for the one peasant who sees the light of the future in the carnage of the past, and in the amazing final sequence topples the icons of decadent display.

On a single viewing of this extraordinary film, one can do no more than point up its brilliant surface. Behind that surface lies an imagination which knows how to use cinema as a dynamic expression of popular art; and it has seldom been used to such astonishing effect. A real find, and a revealing pointer to the vitality of Cuban cinema.

DAVID WILSON

Stuart Rosenberg's 'WUSA'



Philip Trevelyan/The Moon and the Sledgehammer

The best way to describe the film is to describe the maker. Philip Trevelyan is a very large, vague, rather schoolboyish young man (29, actually) with a benign smile and enormous, foursquare potter's hands. Rather difficult to steer around in the street, because he is interested in everything and liable to go rumbling along unstoppably, like a runaway pianola. *The Moon and the Sledgehammer* is precisely the sort of film a runaway pianola would make. A bit awkward, a bit gawky, a bit liable to head firmly if erratically off along some attractive byway. But at the same time with an extraordinary certainty of what it wants to do which somehow imposes itself even when, as occasionally happens, one may not quite see what the film is finally up to, or wonder if it is perhaps a trifle self-indulgent because too uncritically wrapped up in its own curious world.

The world is that occupied by a very odd family indeed, somewhere in the woods not far from Newhaven. There is the old father, his two sons and two daughters. They are linked together in the first place simply because they are a family, and have an evidently strong sense of community, of their close-knit familial situation. But beyond that there is a twin preoccupation with machines and with music. We gather

that whatever money they make (and presumably they can get by with very little) comes from servicing and repairing tractors and other heavy agricultural machinery. But also, the men of the family obviously just love machines, with a single-minded, almost sexual passion. The women are rather less involved, and one of the daughters is little in evidence. The other daughter, Kath, is more domesticated, loves her garden, and enjoys playing the various pianos and harmoniums which also lie scattered in the house and outhouses, and for that matter rear up monumentally among the weeds.

It all seems like an idyll—really back to nature, because nature has never been entirely lost, and with none of the less comfortable aspects showing. (How is this life when it rains or snows? What do they do about sanitation and such?) The members of the family talk a little to one another, a lot to the camera. The father does some comic sideshow barking and reminisces about his sea-going days (true or false, who can say?), the sons hold forth about the follies of politics, the necessity of a return to steam in Britain, and the formation of the moon as observable through a home-made telescope. (This last monologue is interrupted by a kitten, skittering wantonly backwards and forwards across the diagram which is being carefully drawn in the earth for our edification.) But all in the garden is not lovely, and little by little the other side of the picture is revealed. The elder son cannot work with his father because he has to have everything his own way, right or wrong; Kath, the more responsible daughter, nurtures dreams of escape as she fantasises while pretending to drive a half-dismantled bus in the woods.

In fact, even when it seems self-indulgent, the film actually wastes nothing. It is far more complex than at first it seems because Philip Trevelyan's response to his human material is far more complex. Clearly he has fallen in love with this family; equally clearly, he has few illusions about them. And the film's style, while often indirect, as the camera dwells lovingly on some detail of a machine in motion, or follows some self-absorbed insect through the wood-shavings or precariously along the moving keys of an outdoor piano, is in its ultimate effect remarkably austere, without any attempt at 'poetry'. Even the colour, subdued, harsh and very English, all grey skies and dangerous pre-Raphaelite greenery, is severely functional. It is impossible to imagine what the director will do next, simply because this film is so utterly unlike anything else one has ever seen. But it can hardly fail to be strange and interesting.

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

The Neo-Masochists

'One hour later, you always feel hungry,' or 'The trouble with Chinese restaurants is that you can't tell the waiters apart.' Like Chinese meals, any discussion of film festivals throws up its own set of clichés: on the one hand, so the argument runs, their exhausting practice of showing the maximum number of films in the shortest possible time leaves the conscientious spectator no pause for reflection and tends to obscure all but the most idiosyncratic merits of individual films; on the other, this same concentration enables the



Manuel Octavio Gomez' *'Days of Water'*

spectator to observe the emergence of trends and movements which, given a release system that is both haphazard and indifferent to chronology, might otherwise escape his attention. Certainly, the American films on display at the 1971 London Festival reinforce the arguments on both sides: though individually none of them seems to deserve its place in a showcase of the year's best films, collectively they clearly confirm the breaking of the Newest Wave, already randomly signalled in *Medium Cool*, *Easy Rider*, *Five Easy Pieces*, and even *The Seven Minutes*.

As a movement, American Neo-Masochism is held together by considerations of content rather than style, which can range from *cinéma-vérité* documentary to split-screen narrative, with wide-angle long-shots of empty landscapes as the only visual factor in common. Its key themes are Alienation, the Death Wish, the Isolation of Urban Man, the opposition of Men and Machines, the Atrophy of Feeling, the Growth of Violence, and the General Nastiness of Human Nature. These themes have for centuries been providing artists with a source of lamentation, but what distinguishes them here is that they are treated as exclusively American rather than universal, and thus as political or pop-sociological problems rather than as philosophical ones. The films' immediate terms of reference are the Vietnam War and, closer to home, race riots, student agitations, political assassinations and the Manson killings. Unusually bashful in alluding directly to these events, they compensate for this by promoting their characters to archetypes and their characters' possessions to symbols. Their ostensible subject is often no more than a perfunctory springboard for a portentous allegory of American Man, for whom they hold out no hope of survival. Savage in their wholesale indictments, they offer no glimpse of an alternative, constructive course, but instead fiddle angrily with the focus as America's empire burns.

Peter Fonda's first feature, *The Hire Hand* (Paramount), involves a pair of dis-

placed trail-hands (Fonda and the now ubiquitous Warren Oates) meandering on horseback across the Southwest in what gradually emerges as a historical, slow-motion version of *Easy Rider*. Here again, there is a certain tension between the senseless destruction that the characters' escapism involves and the generous dignity of the American landscape, which Fonda endeavours—through a series of irritating superimpositions, reflection shots, dramatic silhouettes and shots into the sun—to render at once lyrical and epic. Perhaps in over-literal response to critics unwise enough to describe *Easy Rider* as a modern Odyssey, the film's central incident involves Fonda's discovery that the wife he deserted seven years ago has indeed been unfaithful to him, while some conspicuous stigmata (sustained in gunfights) and an over-emphatic funeral reading from the New Testament suggest aspirations to the status of Christ as well as Ulysses. The character's neglect of wife and family is justified as part of youth's inevitable wanderlust; and his death at the hands of the sadistic killer whose feet he has maimed assumes the proportion of a religious martyrdom. The violence of the past must be paid for, but in the Gospel according to P. Fonda, the young people—violent and irresponsible though they may be—should not be held to blame.

A somewhat superior odyssey is Monte Hellman's *Two Lane Blacktop* (Rank), with pop musicians James Taylor and Dennis Wilson as a pair of compulsive drag-racers, cruising the minor highways in a souped-up '55 Chevrolet and eventually challenging the driver of a custom-built GTO (Warren Oates again) to a race from New Mexico to Washington D.C. Laying their chassis on the line, they stake their cars on the wager, though it gradually becomes clear that the real prize is the girl hitch-hiker whom they've acquired en route and who proves as incapable of relationships as the rest of them.

An Interview with
Bernard Herrmann

The Colour of the Music



Ted Gilling

Hugo Friedhofer has said that any composer who comes to film hoping to find a vehicle for complete expression is doomed to disappointment. Is he right?

No one person has complete expression because film is a mosaic art, and if you work in films, you have to partake of a community expression. I have worked for some of the most impressive directors of the twentieth century, and until recent times when the new young blades came along, they never heard the phrase 'complete expression'. I never felt that I was being constricted or walked on or made to conform in any manner. I think that people who say that they were simply didn't have the aptitude for writing film music or music of a dramatic nature, though they may be marvellous composers without this ability.

I don't think you condemn a composer because he's not a symphonist. Puccini could only write operas; Brahms never did. I don't know any good composer who felt he was being degraded by writing for films. I agree with Vaughan Williams. He said, 'If you can't learn how to write an interesting piece of thirty seconds duration, there's something wrong with you, not the film.' Some of Chopin's marvellous Preludes don't even last thirty seconds. If you have such a precious talent that it can't take any boundaries or rigid discipline, there's something lacking. Even Bach had to write for a village choir every Sunday. Handel wrote for the greatest singers of his time. But it's luck. It's where you happen to be at the time.

Where did you happen to be?

I learned to become a film composer by doing two or three thousand radio dramas. I worked in radio for fifteen years, and even as recently as four or five years ago I scored a great radio adaptation of Huxley's *Brave New World* at CBS, using six musicians. And about seven or eight years ago I did a series for CBS called 'Crime Classics' for which I'd use three men at the most. Each week was different. Radio was the greatest place to train one's dramatic sense, but I feel that for a composer to be a dramatist is something you either have or you haven't. The ability to write a tune or sell records has nothing to do with it.

Could you be musically original or were you just another sound effect?

I'd say even more original than in films.

I remember doing Archibald Macleish's *Fall of the City* with Irving Reis, and the original 'Suspense' radio series with William Spier and Bill Robson. There was the 'Corwin Presents' (Norman Corwin) series and the Welles Mercury Theatre of the Air. For years I wrote piles of music every week for *The March of Time*. I was musical director of the Columbia Workshop and in charge of a suspense programme called 'Lights Out' . . . I did so many I forget them all now.

There was a lot of television too, but today you aren't supposed to need any of these preparations or apprenticeships. You just go and play a cocktail piano and you get the biggest pictures available.

Many of your best film scores blend both manic rhythms and moody, elegiac

sequences, frequently in the minor key. Have you deliberately sought out this kind of material?

No, I don't seek it out—they seek me out. In California, they like to pigeonhole you. From the time I began working for Hitchcock, they decided I was a big suspense man. On other occasions, I've had fantasies or bittersweet romantic stories. I think I'd enjoy writing a good comedy score, but I've never had the luck to be offered such films. The nearest I got to it was Hitchcock's *The Trouble with Harry*, and perhaps *North by Northwest*. I have no particular theories about keys or modes I work in. The stories are nostalgic or wistful or full of inner contemplation. Mancini gets the cheerful ones. So that's how it is.

In general, where have you had the greatest opportunities to experiment?

Citizen Kane was completely different from any other film ever made, and the score, like the film, works like a jigsaw. For William Dieterle's *The Devil and Daniel Webster*, I used a mixture of the rustic barnyard style of music and a very advanced electronic kind of music. When the devil plays at the barn dance, we superimposed for the first time four violin tracks on top of each other. That wasn't repeated for the commercial recording because you have to see the visual to get the impact of it. And we had another effect which we got from recording the sound of singing telephone wires at 4 a.m. It was always used whenever the devil (Walter Huston) appears.

The film with the most experimental, avant-garde techniques was the picture I did for Robert Wise, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951). At that time, we had no electronic sound, but the score had many electronic features which haven't become antiquated at all: electric violin, electric

'She might have been going to the supermarket. . .'
Janet Leigh in 'Psycho'



'...The colour of the music was like her character.'
Ida Lupino in 'On Dangerous Ground'



bass, two high and low electric theremins, four pianos, four harps and a very strange section of about 30-odd brass. Alfred Newman said the only thing we needed was an electric hot water bottle, which he supplied.

Were there any other unusual combinations of instruments which you were the first to use?

I think the most important was in *Psycho*, because it was the return to pure ice water. It was written for a purely string orchestra. The strange thing was the number of colleagues and informed members of the public who have written me letters asking what instruments I used. They couldn't recognise the sound of a string orchestra—the same kind of orchestra which plays the music of Mozart and Haydn.

Wasn't your work on *The Birds* a musical innovation?

It wasn't music at all. Remi Gassmann, a composer of electronic, avant-garde music, devised a form of sound effects. I just worked with him simply on matching it with Hitchcock, but there was no attempt to create a score by electronic means. We developed the noise of birds electronically because it wasn't possible to get a thousand birds to make that sound. I guess you could if you went to Africa and waited for the proper day.

You once said that music is called upon to supplement what the technicians have done, and mostly what they have been unable to do.

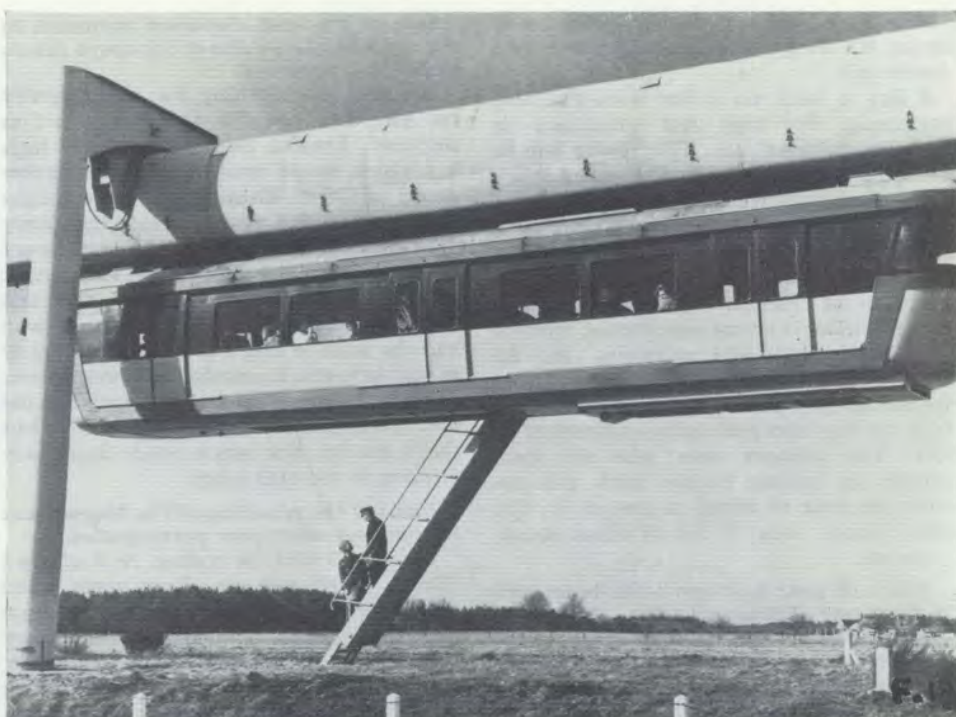
The real reason for music is that a piece of film, by its nature, lacks a certain ability to convey emotional overtones. Many times in many films, dialogue may not give a clue to the feelings of a character. It's the music or the lighting or camera movement. When a film is well made, the music's function is to fuse a piece of film so that it has an inevitable beginning and end. When you cut a piece of film you can do it perhaps a dozen ways, but once you put music to it, that becomes the absolutely final way. Until recently, it was never considered a virtue for an audience to be aware of the cunning of the camera and the art of making seamless cuts. It was like a wonderful piece of tailoring; you didn't see the stitches. But today all that has changed, and any mechanical or technical failure or ineptitude is considered 'with it'.

Music essentially provides an unconscious series of anchors for the viewer. It isn't always apparent and you don't have to know, but it serves its function. I think Cocteau said that a good film score should create the feeling that one is not aware whether the music is making the film go forward or whether the film is pushing the music forward.

Is the composer, in a sense, an actor with a greater range of 'voices off'?

I always think that film music expresses what the actor can't show or tell. For example, when Janet Leigh is driving her car in *Psycho*, all we see is a pleasant young girl driving in the rain with the windscreen wipers going back and forth. From what you see, she might have been going to the supermarket or visiting a friend, but it's the music that tells you that she has embarked on a very dangerous, horrifying experience.

In the very opening of *Citizen Kane*, the music really tells you what 'Rosebud' is.



'Fahrenheit 451': '... the music of the twenty-first century'

When Kane is dying, all the musical motifs and atmospheres of his childhood are presented and the search for 'Rosebud' has really been told to the audience right away. At the end of the film, before the camera discovers the sled, the theme is given out again. And of course it also recurs at key moments of conversation between Kane and all the leading characters.

George Antheil has said that the overture or main titles sequence is the one area where strictly musical form should dominate. Do you agree?

It totally depends on what kind of film it is. I've done main titles that have no relationship to the music which follows. I don't believe that the leitmotif is the only way of writing a film score, because I think you can do it using the operatic principles of Verdi where each number is separate and not derived from the others. They are only derived from the emotional content or the decorative effects of a given moment. The main title music in *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* is never repeated in the film, but it's related because it presents the turmoil of the leading character (Gregory Peck). The idea was that in the film, we had different resolutions of his problems. So you can say that while the prelude presents the problems, other material has to evoke their solution.

Ideally, should film music be able to stand on its own away from the original material, or is it, as Malcolm Arnold says, a hybrid form of applied art?

I don't think there are any laws. Sometimes you have a chance to write a piece of music that would stand up on its own; other times, you only have opportunities that are effective in the film itself. The public seem to remember the music if they remember the film. I don't really know of a piece of music that's had a life away from a poor film. Whatever it is, the film has had a certain life itself and the music goes with it. People don't listen to *The Third Man* theme as a piece of music; they relate it to the film.

I think film music is a strange kind of masquerading form of art.

I remember I did a score for *On Dangerous Ground* (1950) which John Houseman produced and Nicholas Ray directed. Robert Ryan starred with Ida Lupino, who played a blind girl. In it I used a viola d'amore because I felt that the instrument has a veiled quality. It's a very good film; it's still occasionally shown and I'm always very partial to it because I always felt that the colour of the music was like her character. I wouldn't say that it was a piece you should hear in the concert hall, but with the film, it really worked.

Why do you say that it's a great mistake to use the symphony orchestra, as such, in film scoring?

Since the middle of the eighteenth century, the symphony orchestra has always been an agreed body of men performing a repertoire of music. But since a film score is only written for one performance, I could never see the logic in making a rule of the standard symphony orchestra. A film score can be made up of different fantastic groupings of instruments, as I've done throughout my entire career. But I did use the 120-piece London Philharmonic Orchestra for *The Battle of Neretva*, which I scored two years ago. It's a big epic with a documentary flavour, and a lot of mass movement. There, it's better to use a symphony orchestra. It was made in Yugoslavia as a homage to Tito, but the version I did (which will be seen in the West) is not really that. It's a very impressive film: I enjoyed it.

Do you have a typical working method, once the assignment is set?

The first step is to get inside the drama. If you can't, you shouldn't be writing the music. I like to start at five in the morning and work till ten and that's it. You generally have four to five weeks to write an hour of music and they don't give you enough time to revise. It's better to trust your own instinct, which is generally better than your

brains. Give me a man who is instinctive in his art. It's always superior to the intellectual double talk.

I like to work on a film from the very beginning, but very few producers or directors think of that. They bring you in when the picture is near its final cut and they want you to do it within a very short time—always the least amount of time in which you can possibly do it. *Endless Night*, which I've been working on, is an exception. It's based on one of Agatha Christie's thrillers. Sidney Gilliat is a very experienced director who understands the problems, and he asked me to talk with him and consider what we should do musically at an early stage. I find that the older generation of directors do this. The younger ones who are great experts on making bikinis think you can write an hour of music in two days. The film business today is full of bikini manufacturers.

Some of your best work has been with Welles and Hitchcock. Are they particularly sensitive to music?

Nearly all the directors I've worked with had some feelings about the kind of music a picture should have, or if they didn't, the producer might. In the end, I don't think they have definite ideas. The best you can get out of a director is some of his sensitivity about collaborating with a colleague on making a film. Hitchcock, for example, is very anxious for you to tell him when you see a rough cut where you plan to use music, because if you're using music, he'll cut it differently. A scene without dialogue may seem endlessly long by itself, but appears to shorten with the music. *Psycho* has many scenes like this which seemed to take place in a few seconds, yet the sequences are quite long. The opposite happens with the shower murder, which only lasts about ten seconds. People will tell you that it goes on for ever, but it's the intensity of the music which makes it seem so.

You always work with Hitchcock from the beginning, from the time of script. He depends on music and often photographs a scene knowing that music will complete it. If that is the case, he may eliminate dialogue completely. When we worked on *Vertigo*, he said when we came to the famous recognition scene, 'If we're going to have music, we won't have one word of dialogue; we'll just have the camera and you.'

And, not that it's exactly the same, but in *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956), the audience knows that the murder will happen when the cymbals crash. The whole function of this big concert was to build the audience toward that moment. I could have written a new piece instead of keeping Arthur Benjamin's music, but I didn't think that anybody could better what he'd done in the original version. I'm still very happy that I made that decision.

It's hard to talk about Hitchcock. It was a collaboration which I no longer have for many different reasons—none of them personal. The people who produce his films feel that he should use a kind of pop music and I don't agree with that, so I prefer not to bother. I think that Hitchcock's films depend enormously on music to build his nutcracker of suspense, and to impose on him a kind of pop culture is to deprive him of one of the greatest weapons in his arsenal. However, it's not for me to say...

One of the least discussed moments in *Citizen Kane* is the disastrous opera debut. How did that evolve?

We needed something that would terrify the girl and put the audience a bit in suspense. I wrote the aria in a very high key which would make most performances sound strained. Then we got a very light lyric soprano and made her sing this heavy dramatic soprano part with a very heavy orchestration which created the feeling that she was in quicksand. Later on, that aria was sung many times by Eileen Farrell, who had the voice to sing it absolutely accurately in that key, and it sounded very impressive. Some writers have said that the singer in the film performed it deliberately badly, but that's not so. She was a good singer performing in too high a key.

How did the recutting of *The Magnificent Ambersons* affect your participation?

It only affected the ending. As it affected Welles, it affected me. They never asked him to reshoot the ending or me to write new music for it. A composer named Roy Webb wrote the last few minutes of music. They finished *Ambersons* in a totally different style; they didn't even attempt to carry out the textures of Orson Welles. It's said that when Orson's final version was first shown, David Selznick wanted RKO to make a copy for the Museum of Modern Art. But they wouldn't even spend the money to do that. I don't think there is a copy available.

How did Truffaut approach the function of the music scores for *Fahrenheit 451* and *The Bride Wore Black*?

I originally asked him why he wanted me for the *Fahrenheit* music when he knew avant-garde composers like Boulez and Stockhausen. He said, 'Because they'll give me music of the twentieth century. You'll give me the twenty-first.' It sounds like a glib remark, but it wasn't. I felt that the music of the next century would revert to a great lyrical simplicity and that it wouldn't have any truck with all this mechanistic stuff. Their lives would be full of it from morning to night. Their lives would be scrutinised. In their music they would want something of simple nudity, of great elegance and simplicity. So I said, 'If I do your picture, that's the kind of score I want to write—strings, harps and a few percussion instruments. I'm not interested in all this whoopee stuff that goes on being called the music of the future. I think that's the music of the past.'

The Bride Wore Black is Truffaut's homage to Hitchcock, with only one touch that wasn't Hitchcockian—the use of lovers' quarrels. Hitchcock has always been a great observer of the pursuit of lovers, but he rarely goes into their quarrels. I feel that it's a remarkable picture, but it has been mucked around in both English and French versions. You know, Truffaut keeps recutting his films. When I last saw him, he was talking about recutting *Les Quatre Cents Coups*. He feels that a director can continue to go back and recut. He doesn't like to leave a film just as he has finished it, contrary to Orson who says 'That's it' and Hitchcock who never looks at his films again. He runs them for people but he always leaves the room. When it says 'The End', he comes back with a cigar. He says, 'Why do I want to see it? I see all the things that are wrong with it. There's nothing I

can do now.'

The *Egyptian* score which you wrote with Alfred Newman in 1954 was your only collaboration with another composer for a film. Was it difficult?

Newman has never been completely appreciated for his remarkable achievement in films, because he was the first film composer (and maybe in many ways the last) who achieved the highest technical finish and polish of film performance. I think he did a marvellous job on *The Song of Bernadette* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. Collaborating with him on *The Egyptian* was a pleasure, and I'm very fond of that score because it embodies many of the things we've been talking about.

No one knows anything about Egyptian music of that period (5000 B.C.), so we had to invent it, and I'm proud of the result. I feel that if they did have music, ours would be something like it. I don't feel this intellectually; I feel it emotionally and I feel it so strongly that I believe that in a way it must be so. Alfred felt that way too.

That score and others like *Beneath the Twelve Mile Reef* and *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* were all done in four-track stereophonic recordings, but all the versions of these films which you see today are monaural pushdowns. To see and hear *The Egyptian* in CinemaScope and colour and stereo sound is a different world altogether. It's a shame in a way that all these wonderful movies end up on the television screen with terrible sound and three-quarters of the picture cut off.

Who wrote what for *The Egyptian*?

Alfred handled all the sequences dealing with Merit (Jean Simmons) and I did all the sequences involving Nefer (Bella Darvi). The rest we wrote together. After all these years, the record we did of it still sells very well. It and *The Robe* and *The Big Country* by Jerome Moross are about the only ones of that vintage still around.

Aside from Newman, are there other composers whom you admire and who have perhaps influenced your work?

One of the finest scores ever written for a film was by the Polish composer Karol Rathaus for a German production of *The Brothers Karamazov* in 1931. I met him many years ago in New York. He lived in Brooklyn and taught at Queen's College. This man was one of the absolute geniuses of film music, but in the last thirty-five years of his life no one ever gave him the opportunity to do any kind of film. *Uncle Silas* was an original and unique film and Alan Rawsthorne's score is a remarkable achievement. He should have done more films.

And I admire the great achievements of Prokofiev and Shostakovich. The most amazing Prokofiev score was for *Ivan the Terrible*, which I think was superior to *Alexander Nevsky*.

There are others who are not mentioned much today, like the remarkable scores of Ralph Vaughan Williams for *49th Parallel* and *The Loves of Joanna Godden*. The late Anthony Collins who worked with Herbert Wilcox did some remarkable work and was able to blend the most formal music with the most hilarious situations. William Walton we all know, but I differ from my colleagues and contemporaries who like his big epic scores. They are marvellous, but I think his most amazing achievement was for

Major Barbara and I remember that and his score for *Escape Me Never* with the most pleasure. Both had more intimate music.

Now that the studio system is all but dead, are you discovering greater freedom in your assignments, both in the style of the material and the mechanics of your own participation?

I always had the greatest artistic freedom when I was working for a studio. The more it became *laissez faire*, the less freedom I had. Today you have a bikini manufacturer or a cigar maker who knows all about everything. All he wants to hear is 'Yes, it's great.' I don't think it's freedom at all. What has happened is that a lot of incompetent people have been able to get work pretending they're artists whereas in the old studio system they wouldn't have got far, because they'd have been assigned to be somebody's assistant and their level of talent would have been quickly discovered. I recently worked on a film with a fellow. He's a nice enough chap and I think he may have seen a thousand movies in his life, yet he hadn't the vaguest idea of how a film was made. He was the director.

Until recently, people had a career in films through creating a body of work with a team of people. Each director or producer had a team within the studio set-up. Today, no matter who you are, you have no continuity of career. You've got a chance to make a film, and unless that makes an exorbitant commercial return, you're finished. Schlesinger said recently, 'If this [*Sunday, Bloody Sunday*] doesn't go, I'm finished.' Why should a man of his talent even *dream* of saying such a thing? Every director is entitled to make bad films. Everybody does sometimes. Even Beethoven had bad music. But not in this thing. You're just as good as you were a second ago.

They are not people who know about aesthetics. When *Psycho* was made, nobody in the front office liked it. They all thought they ought to cut it drastically and sell it as a television show. They only know in music how many records you sell.

What do you see as the future shape of film production, and how will it affect your own work?

I'm very pessimistic. Every three weeks, there's a group of new geniuses. I don't believe that it's possible for civilisation to turn out this amount of talent in three weeks. Talent is the smallest thing about being an artist in anything. You need many years of apprenticeship to develop the craft that goes with being creative—the discipline, the experience. If I were starting to work in films today as a young man, I'd tell them, 'Get lost. You have no need for me. You want everything that sounds like everybody else.' The point of sounding like everybody else is to be safe. We live in a time when everybody is terrified to be on his own. He has to be part of it all. I don't know what 'it' means. Where you can go and see a Western with a rock score? What am I supposed to identify with?

Georges Auric once explained to me very acutely the disadvantage of using pop music dramatically in films. He said, 'The trouble is that all popular songs are based on an eight-bar phrase, so once they start the melody, they've got to finish it. It *has* to last that long.' Ideally, film music should be based on phrases no longer than a second or



'... If they did have music, ours would be something like it'. Bella Darvi in 'The Egyptian'



'Citizen Kane': '... the feeling that she was in quicksand'

two, but a popular song needs a certain span and this is partly why so many film scores today are disappointing. You go to a pop concert, not a film score. It goes along with the picture; it doesn't go with it. It often has no relationship to the picture. Sometimes the people who write it never see the film. Most music today is no longer used for any purpose except to sell gramophone records. Now you make pictures with the commercial record in mind.

What annoys you most about your profession and what pleases you?

It once demanded from those who worked in it great professional skill, and it saddens me to see that this is no longer needed, in the same way that it's no longer needed to have marvellous people like those who enamelled jewellery in the sixteenth century. The art of writing music for films is close enough to extinction that unless tastes

change very quickly in the next few years, it *will* become extinct, because the new people coming into it simply haven't got the technical knowhow. The art of writing or orchestrating a musical is going to die out too, because today they don't seem to want that kind of pit sound. They want a rock group. Not from me. I'm not saying that rock is wrong. I'm all for anything, but I'm against it when it takes over and becomes common to everything. I don't have to hear the Mozart G minor Symphony with a rock background and I don't like the Mona Lisa with a moustache, but some people evidently do.

But I was lucky enough to work during the golden years of the film industry, when it was dominated by personalities who knew how to put together big films using impressive techniques. It afforded me a great opportunity to express myself.



FIRST PERSON SINGULAR



Joseph McBride

'First Person Singular' was the singularly apt title of Orson Welles' first radio series. Although he signed off each of his programmes with the words 'Obediently Yours', Welles was about as self-effacing as a drunken butler, intruding himself into the plots of everything from *Hamlet* to Commander Edward Ellsberg's *Hell on Ice*. In an original drama he broadcast three days before the first showing of *Citizen Kane*, a fable about Fascism in small-town America entitled *His Honor, The Mayor*, there is a brief scene in which the beleaguered mayor sits down to a hearty breakfast. This prompts a long rumination from Welles beginning, 'Take my word for it, when responsibilities get to be almost unendurable, a man on a diet takes to his sugars and starches as an addict retreats to his opium-pipe, or a drunkard to his bottle . . .' Welles used this interlocutory technique heavily in the early scenes of his radio shows. Only after the issues were thoroughly defined would he withdraw and let his characters work out a solution to the problems he had outlined: 'As I told you, this story hasn't any moral or message of mine tied to it. It's about morals and messages though . . .' Of course, the commentary also served simple technical functions, but the way Welles forced the audience's attention on to his own presence in the drama was wholly personal. As a show progressed, his omniscience would begin to seem rather sinister, as if the characters were merely functions of his own thoughts and desires.

Welles' films reflect the influence of radio in their narrated prologues, which often provide a poetic or literal synopsis of the story, and in the director's dual presence as protagonist and commentator. But because of the cinema's heightened complexity, Welles could never more than approximate the confidential intimacy possible in the one-dimensional world of radio. He has said that

he loves 'innocent' forms of entertainment, such as magic, Westerns and the early horror films, because they take the audience back to the beginnings of story-telling . . . back to the bard strumming his lyre and murmuring in the darkness of the cave. This may also explain his nostalgia for radio, which has persisted decades past the death of radio as a dramatic instrument.

In 1958 Welles made a television pilot film, *The Fountain of Youth*, based on John Collier's short story *Youth from Vienna*. It was to inaugurate a series of short story adaptations which he would host, narrate and direct, much like the old 'First Person Singular' series on radio. The second programme was to have been based on Collier's *Green Thoughts*. At the end of the pilot Welles calls it 'A sort of spook story with a seasoning of giggles'; which is also an apt summation of *The Fountain of Youth*. Needless to say, the pilot was considered eccentric, and Welles never found backing for the series. Given a single showing on ABC-TV, *The Fountain of Youth* won a Peabody Award for creative achievement and then disappeared into the oblivion of the vaults, surfacing only briefly during a Welles retrospective at Hollywood's Los Feliz Theatre in 1969.* It remains his only work of television fiction (he has done fairly extensive work in TV documentary), his only 'film conceived for the box', as he recently described it. For the record, his *Don Quixote*, recently completed after sixteen years of intermittent shooting, began production as a television show but gradually grew into a feature; and his *The Immortal Story* was only financially connected with the box—it was made with money from a French television network.

Welles' film audience is missing a revealing experience in not being able to see *The Fountain of Youth*. Its mixture of bold theatrical stylisation, puckish humour and bardic intimacy draws on a side of Welles, the 'radio side', which seldom pokes through the intricate architectonics of his feature film work. *The Immortal Story* is told with a fabulist's simplicity, but it is still a story film conceived for the large screen, with all the pretence of showing real people involved in a real drama. *The Fountain of Youth* is more a chamber play than a drama. Welles is on screen, in Mephistophelean evening dress, longer than any of the putative principals, often stepping in front of the camera while the scene behind him blurs or fades away; he speaks the characters' unspoken thoughts, interprets their motives, warns of impending events, and occasionally even speaks their lines while they move their mouths like puppets. The most nostalgic touch comes at the very end, when Welles signs off, 'Till then, I remain—as always—obediently yours . . .' as the screen darkens around his darkly smiling profile.

But in *The Fountain of Youth* form follows function, for the theme of the piece is narcissism. The Collier story is a whimsical take-off on the Faust theme; it is about an endocrinologist, Humphrey Baxter, who develops an eternal youth potion and uses it to tamper with the affections of a naive young actress, Caroline Coates. Like Collier, Welles relegates the Faust business to a red herring (the potion turns out to be a

* Max Laemmle, manager of the Los Feliz, had to obtain clearance from several trade guilds in order to give it a theatrical showing. Desilu, now a Paramount subsidiary, provided the 35 mm. print, which played for four weeks on a bill with *Chimes at Midnight*.

Above: 'The Fountain of Youth'. Orson Welles, Joi Lansing, Dan Tobin, Rick Jason. Stills by Joseph L. Bridges Jr.

fraud, nothing but water and salt, which the scientist has been using as a kind of truth serum), in order to reduce our metaphysical speculations to a baser, more human, level. Welles holds the distinct advantage over Collier of working in a visual medium. None of his films has ever made such extensive use of mirrors, for instance, and the sheer physical data of the characters' faces and bodies (e.g., the pneumatic bliss of watching Joi Lansing waddle through the role of Caroline) speak volumes. In fact, it is problematic who should be considered the protagonist of the tale: Caroline, who has Humphrey in her spell, or Welles himself, who has both of them in *his* spell.

I opt for Welles, on the evidence of one splendidly theatrical moment. It occurs after a gossip columnist bumbles into a radio microphone about Caroline and Alan Brodie (Rick Jason), her tennis-player Valentino, and we see a rococo fountain cascading against a lowering sky. Welles begins talking about the legendary fountain of youth and the myth of Narcissus. Suddenly he is before the camera, telling us *sotto voce*, 'It was his own expression he fell for . . . and he fell in.' The camera holds on Welles for a long moment, with vague shadowy forms moving in the studio behind him, as he contemplates that statement with a bemused expression. It's as if he's saying: 'Here's Narcissus, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Orson Welles. You will shortly be watching several varieties of human being fall under the spell of vanity, but don't be smugly superior, for it is your obedient servant who is playing out his obsessions so that you, on the other side of the lens, will see them in yourselves. Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? The mirror does . . .'

The early sequences are suffused with that off-handed indulgence toward human weakness which Welles often uses to implicate the audience in the characters' dilemma. The prologue of *The Magnificent Ambersons*, for instance, presents the family's snobbery as charming and captivating (young George snapping his whip at the inviting butt of a street labourer, Isabel curling her nose at Gene Morgan's horrid automobile). The nostalgia Welles shares with his characters is a melancholic glance back at a time of moral innocence. He lets us indulge in the pleasures of irresponsibility before we have to face its consequences. In *The Fountain of Youth*, as in *Ambersons*, he dwells on the romantic quaintness of vanished artifacts and customs to keep us aware of their evanescence. The story is prefaced by a shot of a magic lantern flashing into the camera; the characters are introduced with stills; honky-tonk music on the soundtrack whisks us back to the 1920s. In this context, Humphrey's dabbling with the sources of life seems, at first, an invigorating rebellion against his own encroaching decay, a Lawrentian howl against the stuffiness of the laboratory.

The play in which he spots Caroline is titled *Destiny's Tot*, but destiny is the furthest thing from his mind: what we actually see of the play is Caroline lasciviously posed against a barnyard backdrop to an undertone of orgasmic clapping. Stunned by the spectacle, the scientist removes his social mirror—takes off his glasses—in a gesture which will be echoed

at the end, when he confronts Caroline with the truth about his deception. Humphrey (Dan Tobin) is not the effortlessly passionate young scientist of the Collier story, but a tweedy middle-aged remnant of the Victorian era uncomfortably stranded, like Gene Morgan, amidst the technological brutalities of the new century. Just as Gene's automobile quickly evolves from a romantic fancy into a soul-devouring monster, Humphrey's potion begins as an offshoot of his fascination with Caroline but soon leads to cool talk about how the potion is obtained in an 'extremely delicate operation which unfortunately is fatal to the animal we get it from . . . It's quite a common animal . . . man.' The brittleness of Humphrey's dream is beautifully captured in the fast montage of stills Welles uses to depict the couple's first kiss.

Befitting the medieval (or is it futuristic?) nature of Humphrey's experiments, his laboratory is an eerily unreal chamber with outsize jars and bottles looming behind him like the odd shapes moving behind Welles in the studio/laboratory he inhabits. To clinch the connection, the director has placed one incongruous object in the laboratory—a bulky old-fashioned radio with a giant shell for a speaker. Like other Wellesian Faust figures (Bannister in *The Lady from Shanghai*, Arkadin, Quinlan in *Touch of Evil*, Clay in *The Immortal Story*), Humphrey tests his powers by constructing a fable with living characters. Removed, by his romanticism, from the world of ordinary people, he tries to twist reality to fit the shape of his own ego. The irony in *The Fountain of Youth* is that the man who pulls the strings is also attached to an invisible set of strings. When Humphrey divulges his secret to Caroline and Alan in the laboratory, Welles mocks the 'secret' by supplying the first lines for each character. During the scene the camera moves repeatedly in and out on the vial as it changes hands, giving it an almost palpable power of involuntary attraction. A clock ticks with hallucinatory slowness throughout the scene, and Caroline and Alan exchange glazed, zombie-like looks as Humphrey facetiously 'marries' them by joining their hands around the vial.

'Time, which was the cause of all this trouble, went on . . .' Welles murmurs in one of the subsequent scenes, barely suppressing an unholy smile at the thought of Caroline and Alan examining each other for wrinkles and arguing over who should drink the potion. Caroline is Youth, and youth is impermanence, and what is it that Humphrey wants if not to immortalise the moment? The grotesqueness of an older man, a man of superior intellect, pursuing a young floozie evokes all the destructive illogic of the romantic impulse. Caroline is the *reductio ad absurdum* of romance, all surface and show. Humphrey doesn't want her for herself, but for what she represents. She is a token of everything missing in his life, beginning with sex, which is nothing if not a struggle to escape into a timeless state of perfect irresponsibility. The rub is, of course, that the moment of happiness disappears as soon as consciousness returns to savour it. In Welles' fundamentally romantic viewpoint, women stand for everything a man strives after but cannot possess. Since women symbolise everything which is

greater than man, they are also the source of his destruction. They are beyond reason, beyond morality, beyond responsibility.

The last section of *The Fountain of Youth* is given over to a series of expressionistically lit, ballet-like gestures in which the two youths act out the consequences of Humphrey's narcissism while he, with scientific detachment, disappears from view. Welles fades in on the vial shining unnaturally out of the darkness, harsh electronic sounds hovering in the air. A hand comes out of the void to put the vial on a mantel, and the light rises to reveal both Caroline and Alan gazing into a mirror—the lens of the camera. The effect is profoundly disturbing, for we are watching them but they are watching *us*. They fade away, again leaving the vial shining in the darkness. Soon we see Caroline standing behind Alan as he gazes into the camera. Welles narrates in a hushed voice, 'She watched him in the mirror, and he saw her . . . watching him . . .' Suddenly everything but his hand and the vial plunge into darkness, a *coup de théâtre* which defies verbal description except to say that it is the closest equivalent to a shudder ever put on film.

The world turns into a crazy house (cf. the last reel of *The Lady from Shanghai*) when Alan, succumbing to the temptation of drinking the vial, refills it with water and bitters to let Caroline do the same. The vial on the mantel, seen through the camera/mirror, dissolves to a shot of an actual mirror, which in turn dissolves to a shot of that mirror seen through *another* mirror. The master of ceremonies explains off-screen, 'Now the emptiness of one's own home at midnight can seem like an injury . . .' The emptiness of mirrors reflecting upon themselves with no one, but the audience, looking into them: the emptiness of a mind disintegrating. Our mind.

The next shot, as extraordinary as anything Welles has ever conjured up with his camera, shows Caroline standing in silhouette before a huge mirror. The mirror mocks its function, for it does not reflect anything at all; instead it is filled with a frozen view of her own face, grinning. The mirror is festooned with a garland of thorns. Welles' voice, portentous and rhythmic as the ticking of the clock in Humphrey's laboratory, intones, 'She could feel and almost hear the remorseless erasures of time . . .' as she runs her hands over the mirror. A clock begins ticking, and the face in the glass begins to metamorphose. Like the Picture of Dorian Gray, the mirror reveals the hidden emptiness of death. Layer after layer of luxuriant flesh dissolves relentlessly down to the skull. She screams, cymbals crash, and our mirror, the screen, is engulfed with hers in utter darkness. A still shows Caroline drinking the potion—time has stopped—before Humphrey tells her that it has all been a trick. Maybe I was wrong when I said that *The Fountain of Youth* came out of radio. Maybe it came out of those 'Mercury Wonder Shows' in which Welles, billed as The Great Orsino, sawed blondes in half and made them disappear. It was done with mirrors, remember. ■

The author wishes to thank Arthur Knight for giving him access to The Fountain of Youth.



CURSED BE MY TRIBE

A SECOND LOOK AT THE TOUCH

James Paul Gay

In August 1970, Ingmar Bergman changed the course of his career by announcing that for the first time he would be making a film in English, for an American film company. A further surprise came with the selection of comedian Elliott Gould as the star of this maiden venture.

Aside from Gould, Bergman was working with his regular troupe: Bibi Andersson and Max von Sydow co-star, and the photography is by Sven Nykvist. Nevertheless, from the title sequence onward, *The Touch* looks different from anything else Bergman has ever done. It opened in summer 1971 to generally mediocre Swedish reviews, with most critics commenting on the shallowness of the plot, Bergman's discomfort with the English dialogue, and Gould's laboured acting. In general, the film was dismissed as a minor lapse in a great career (about on the same level as *Now About These Women*), an interlude from which Bergman would recover as soon as his next film was released.

However, far from being dissociated from the main body of his work, *The Touch* explores and develops some of Bergman's oldest and most important themes. What is jarring about the film is not the initial false impression one gets of Bergman shooting off in trivial directions: it is rather the enormous disparity between the thematic development and the deliberately banal style. Bergman's art has been developed through the conflict and ambiguity that he feels toward God and Religion; even if he leaves this preoccupation for a time (as with *Persona* or *The Shame*), he returns to it again as he has done here. *The Touch* is a film about religion. It differs from Bergman's other religious films only in that it is the first to deal explicitly with the conflict between Judaism and Christianity, or more precisely with the threat of Judaism to Christianity.

The memory of the Nazi holocaust has muted the consciousness of this conflict, but to one obsessed, as Bergman is, with the disintegration of the Christian universe, the question cannot be entirely suppressed. Bergman has long had a strange fascination with Judaism. He is given to illustrating his

interviews with old Yiddish stories and Jewish jokes, and his continual re-examination of Christian symbology (especially crucifixion) leads him to Jewish symbols as well. Bergman has touched upon Jewish artifacts before—one thinks of the famous photograph from the Warsaw Ghetto in *Persona*—but recently the Jews seem to have occupied a more prominent place in his thoughts. Last spring, Bergman directed a new play by Lars Forsell, called *Show*, about the Jewish comedian Lenny Bruce. And now with *The Touch* he makes a Jew the central character in his own drama.

The conflict between thematic continuity and stylistic capriciousness is so marked that it effectively misleads the viewer in his appraisal of the film. During the first twenty minutes one is simply tempted to dismiss it as inept. *The Touch*—ostensibly a very simple story about a bitter-sweet love affair between a Swedish doctor's wife and a visiting American archaeologist—is poorly constructed and sketchily drawn. The camera set-ups, the lighting, the editing and most of all the sound are slickly and superficially executed. Close-ups abound of car

headlights being turned off, vacuum cleaners being pushed up to the camera, telephones being racked into focus just as they are about to ring; scenes end by having people walk into the lens, blacking out the screen. There is a montage of Bibi Andersson trying on various dresses before a mirror as she prepares to meet her lover that is reminiscent of Rouben Mamoulian at his worst—not of the creator of *Wild Strawberries* and *The Silence*.

This simply doesn't make sense. One can imagine Bergman stumbling over plot or characterisation (although not to the extent that he does here), but he is after all one of the greatest craftsmen ever to look through a lens. Regardless of anything else, Bergman cannot be charged with incompetence.

Most critics and the public have taken the film at face value—when it opened in Stockholm, one of the Swedish newspaper reviewers called it 'Bergman's Love Story'. I believe that this view misses the point; the film only begins to make sense if one looks behind the obvious plot and the music on the soundtrack. What then remains is Bergman's examination of a special frightened, tortured and confused anti-semitism.

Elliott Gould (David) is an archaeologist who is digging up an old church on the Island of Gotland. Karin (Bibi Andersson) falls in love with David. She is married to a surgeon; her husband (Max von Sydow) is a man of great humanity and warmth. They have two children, both bright, spontaneous and loving. Their life together in an idyllic country house surrounded by gardens is bourgeois, but it is bourgeois at its best: secure, tender, stimulating, and (one is made to feel very strongly) fun. From the moment that David and Karin first encounter one another, in an abrupt



and ugly scene at a hospital right after her mother has died, their relationship is one of strangeness, tension and hostility. It is not at all a question of Gould as a bohemian, violent and unpredictable antithesis to Bibi Andersson's married life. It is rather that Bergman establishes an environment in which there is no motivation for Karin wanting to drink a cup of tea together with David, let alone carry on a passionate affair of two years duration. Their relationship is not that of a woman drawn to a man, but rather of love, security, order and tenderness drawn to its antithesis. This antithesis, in the perspective of the film, seems to be symbolised by David's Judaism.

Bergman makes us see that David is not what he purports to be: a tortured intellectual whose family has been exterminated in the concentration camps (we later find out that this is at least partly a lie: his sister is living in London). David is quite simply nefarious: a non-person whose face shines with the malevolence of a gargoyle, who crouches like a simian and whose gait is that of a brain-injured child. And here I think can be found the answer to a central riddle of the film: why Bergman chose Gould. David is not a character: he is a symbol, or more precisely, an icon. He is a catalyst for the other characters, the propulsive force toward iniquity. For this Bergman broke away from his tradition of ensemble acting and relied instead (much as Eisenstein did) on type-casting. A certain figure was needed to convey David's awful inarticulateness, his blind and random destructiveness. Bergman found this type in an alien actor: it would not do to have a Shylock who bleeds.

Karin and David begin their affair in the church David is excavating—interesting in itself since Bergman imposes religious objects continually throughout the film, and many of the most important shots end with the camera moving away from the actors

and on to a gargoyle or a saint or a Christ. David shows Karin an ancient wooden statue of the Virgin Mary, still partially entombed within the church wall. He shines a flashlight on the statue and we see how similar she looks to Karin. Later on, when David's and Karin's affair is disintegrating, Bergman returns to this church for the central scene in the film. David shows Karin the now fully excavated statue and explains that insect larvae have been discovered lying within the wood. They have lain dormant for five hundred years; now that the statue has been brought to light again the larvae are hatching and eating the Virgin away from within. Aside from the cheapness of this parable, it refers to two parallel things: David's relationship with Karin, and the Jews' relationship to Christianity. The larvae have lain dormant for five hundred years—roughly the time that the Jews of Europe were ghettoised—and now they are beginning their work again. If one posits a universal world order of Christianity, the menace of the Jews to that order becomes obvious: they can neither be assimilated nor exterminated. Like insects, they survive because they hide in dark places, they go where no one is looking and they work from within. The underground (and hence insect-like) existence of Jews within Christian society has been a staple of Jewish literature since Kafka.

When David was making love to Karin, he suddenly began screaming in an incomprehensible language: the English that he spoke in everyday situations was merely a cultural appendage that David affected in order to be able to move among the alien outside world. At the unguarded moment of orgasm, he reverts back to his own unique, incomprehensible and sinister-sounding tongue. David's English is like every other visible characteristic: camouflage. What exists at the core is a man who is not a part of any society, nation, language or

culture except his own.

David materialises from nowhere and he disappears just as suddenly. Karin, distraught, drives her open hand into broken glass, making a stigmata on her palm. She then goes off to London in search of him, even though she knows it means the end of her marriage and life as she had known it. She traces him to his flat and finds not David, but his sister, a deformed woman named Sarah (Sarah was the code name given by the Germans to all Jewish women as part of the identity-stripping process). Who is this woman? Where does she come from? We do not know. Unlike the Swedes of Karin's world, all of whom have a clear place in society and a clear relationship with the people around them, Sarah and David exist in a vacuum.

This historical refusal of the Jews to surrender their identity, to join in a larger chorus of angels, is something that one feels the film sees as frightening. The Jews are without roots; they live in a geographical and historical void and hence, for *The Touch*, perhaps in a type of spiritual void as well.

The horrors of the last generation have tended to institutionalise our thinking about anti-semites (and Jews as well). One's mind is forced immediately to think of the mass rallies, the ghettos, the window smashings and finally, Auschwitz. This has hidden a far older, far more traditional fear of the Jews. The guilt felt about Dachau has served only to mask this fear, to drive it further inward, to sublimate it into other forms. But, like Bergman's insects, it survives in the dark. Bergman has worked within the genre of a simple love story to play out a drama that is far from simple and even farther from love. ■

Left to right above: Ingmar Bergman, Max von Sydow and Bibi Andersson, Sheila Reid (Sarah), Elliott Gould.



KUBRICK'S HORRORSHOW

Philip Strick

That there is a basic incompatibility between clockworks and oranges would seem self-evident enough for reminders to be unnecessary. As writers of speculative fiction have frequent cause to comment, however, human nature is not disposed to accept the obvious. As long as there are oranges, there will be men with bright ideas on how to make them tick—and those with equally bright, if somewhat reactionary, ideas on how to leave them just as they are.

The matter is not, of course, solely one of citrus mechanics: Sophocles was not the first to examine it, nor would Orwell be the last. When Anthony Burgess came to tackle it some ten years ago in his exuberant novel *A Clockwork Orange*, he wisely confined its repetition to a quotation from the work of the hysterical journalist in his story (an insulating device of which Nabokov would undoubtedly have approved): 'The attempt to impose upon man, a creature of growth and capable of sweetness, to ooze juicily at the last round the bearded lips of God, to attempt to impose, I say, laws and conditions appropriate to a mechanical creation, against this I raise my sword-pen.' Dickens wouldn't have put it quite like that, nor would Carlyle, Wells or Kipling (although it must have been a close thing sometimes), but they certainly shared the sentiment. It was only by satirising the theme in this lasciviously conventional manner that Burgess could feel free to go ahead and expound it once again in a fresh and thoroughly unconventional disguise.

The novel tells how a teenage thug in a future of no great distance from now is imprisoned for murder, rehabilitated by a form of shock therapy, and restored hastily to his former self when the side effects of the rehabilitation drive him to attempt suicide and the popular press rushes to his support. His reign of terrorism given new respectability, he is even more potent than before—and at this point some editions of the book come to an end, glowing with anticipation. In others, Burgess has added a further chapter in which, worn out at eighteen, Alex decides to settle down and get married as soon as he can find the right girl. What clockwork couldn't achieve, the orange does for itself by going soft at the centre.

In transferring *Clockwork Orange* to the screen, Stanley Kubrick has dispensed both with the capsule explanation of what he is about and with the milk-and-water ending. The former is superfluous, the latter uncharacteristic. The activities of Alex DeLarge (and resemblances to Alexander the Great are more than nominal) are their own message, while it is more in the nature of Kubrick's heroes to go down fighting if they have to go at all than to resign the struggle in favour of a quiet life. More importantly, since *A Clockwork Orange* is primarily an assault upon the cosy, the comfortable and the mundane (precisely the unthinkingly obscene conservatism, in fact, that is expressed by Burgess's raving radical), even the suggestion of a Hollywood-hued sunset romance at its conclusion would be the most treacherous kind of emasculation. The film has taken from Burgess the fun and vitality of his novel and rejects its second-thought compromises, even if Kubrick, ironically enough, has added a compromise of his own here and there. Alex, for instance, has matured into his twenties (a ten-year-old

candidate for rape in the book has also shot up to well-endowed adulthood in the film), his drug-taking is confined to glasses of milk 'plus something else', a number of his less engaging exploits—including an extra killing during his period in prison—have been omitted, while his henchmen have become almost lovable.

Kubrick's most wholehearted adoption has been of the Burgess vocabulary, an argot compounded from Romany and Russian words that have been directly Anglicised: tolchok (hit), devotchka (girl), malenky (little), and, most memorable of them all, horrorshow (roughly translatable as 'very well'). Alex takes us into his confidence as the film begins, and the basic words are painlessly established, spoken with a chirpy and engagingly familiar Midlands accent: 'I could never stand to see a moodge all filthy and rolling and burping and drunk, especially when he was real starry like this one was.' The Burgess phrases have a rhythm and glitter to them which the film often maintains delightedly intact, both in the colloquialisms of Alex and his droogs and in the remarks of the more integrated members of society ('Love's young nightmare like,' observes one of the constables as he beats up Alex in the interrogation cell); and if the puzzle words become less prominent as the film ceases to need them, their echoes remain in Alex's unmistakable inflexions and his conspiratorial asides to his audience. Although the extent to which Russian has infiltrated the language of those least likely to have encountered it raises interesting conjecture as to political developments in Alex's tomorrow world, this is the first sustained success on film of what science fiction writers (notably Heinlein) have long used as a necessary element in describing plausible futures.

But then words, and the gaps between them, have always been important in Kubrick's work. He divides his dialogues into immense soliloquies like the rolling

catalogues spoken by General Ripper, the President, and even the bomber pilot in *Strangelove*, or alternatively into a nervous shorthand, like the clipped formalities of 2001. In *Clockwork Orange*, the unclassifiable poetry of Burgess has somehow become the same Kubrick vernacular—a duet between the articulate Alex, flourishing his words like torches in the air, and the brutish snarls of his opponents who, like the warder or the cat-lady, curse him with venom but without subtlety. And when Alex is forced into reticence, his place in the scene is taken by other smooth talkers: the teacher, the prison chaplain, the Minister, each with the same ability to talk in a kind of half-twist, their arguments as elusive as a Möbius strip. The result is Kubrick comedy, the subtle distortions quickly accumulating into surrealism to which the characters respond with earnest solemnity. An example in *Clockwork Orange* is the sequence in which the rehabilitated Alex is tested out in front of an audience of politicians and social workers. Glowingly introduced, he is suddenly set upon by a sinister man who forces Alex to lick his shoe, and by a semi-nude blonde whose invitation leaves him retching on the floor. The indignities are wildly applauded, his assailants bow ecstatically in the spotlight and skip off, and a discussion of the ethics of choice begins over Alex's head. It couldn't possibly work, but it does.

At the centre of all Kubrick's films is an endurance test, and *Clockwork Orange* continues the pattern. Like Humbert Humbert before him, Alex sets in motion an inescapable retribution and weathers it tolerably well (two years in prison, two weeks of treatment, two days of punishment at the hands of his former victims) before being forced into his suicide attempt by the allergy his treatment has given him to Beethoven's Ninth. Then, like Bowman in 2001, he is reborn ('I came back to life after black, black night for what might have been a million years'), and is rescued by events outside his control, carefully restored to his original anarchism by attentive specialists. His new wisdom gives him a tremendous, if unspecified, power which he can confidently be expected to devote to self-indulgence; the parallels to 2001 seem too clearly pointed to be accidental, not least the opening shot of *Clockwork Orange* in which the Star-child's unblinking gaze can be seen in the stare Alex gives us as the camera retreats from his face to the other side of the room. There is an awareness of potency in his look, a sense of power that, like General Ripper's, will be wielded not wisely but too well. The end of the world as we know it is in his eyes.

Not that Kubrick is repeating himself—far from it. His greatest accomplishment with *Clockwork Orange* has been to step briskly out from the shadow of 2001 and to resume film-making as though multi-million budgets had never been heard of. In case we might have forgotten, he reminds us of the skill with which he can structure a

Left, above: Malcolm McDowell. Below: '... a whole contemplative scene of torture.'

simple conversation scene in a simple domestic setting, extract perfect timing from his actors, select lighting and lenses with invincible authority, and edit his material ruthlessly into an unflagging pace (*Clockwork Orange* is well over two hours and feels like ninety minutes). His new film is boisterous, intimate, explicit and gaudy, none of which applied to *2001*. Instead of being in any apparent way concerned about whether he was going to be able to live up to *2001*, he has relaxed and enjoyed himself; and while it is difficult to imagine Alex and Bowman occupying anything remotely like the same century, Kubrick has contrived to show a fresh alternative future that owes nothing to *2001*'s aseptic architecture. The exteriors are glassy, box-like, and cluttered with rubbish, the interiors are lurid, inelegant and uneasily angular, with contemporary furniture that looks uncomfortably like tomorrow's suburban leftovers. Inhabiting these inhospitable cells, logically enough, are the aging exponents of today's fashions, locked as though ice-bound into their trendy gear.

Repeatedly, Kubrick opens his scenes with immense tracking shots, like the low-angle spin around the record boutique just ahead of Alex on the prowl, or the equally confident accompaniment to the psychiatrist sweeping through the wards with her trolley of equipment. The hand-held camera comes into action for scenes of urgency and impending disaster—Alex's fight with the cat-lady, the struggle through torrential rain, and the seemingly endless march towards an unknown destination as Alex's former gang members, now enlisted in the police force, lead him gloatingly off across muddy woodland. By contrast, he also uses static long-shots in which the human figures in the distance wander through an indeterminate choreography among settings made subtly ominous by his distorting lens. And more than one can recall his having done before, Kubrick uses subjective shots which place us in Alex's viewpoint, identify-

ing us with the hero of *Clockwork Orange* in his moments of greatest crisis—being crushed to the floor, lying powerless in the hospital, or, most unsettling of all, falling in despair from his window to smash himself on the paving below. The device ensures that Alex constantly has our sympathy, that, despite the occasional extremism of his high spirits, he remains (as in his own irrepressible view) merely the misunderstood victim of social injustice ready to accumulate a further load of misunderstanding as soon as he gets another opportunity.

'Actions speak louder than.' The phrase is one of Kubrick's favourites from *Clockwork Orange*, and the film could almost have been constructed around it. Movement is a vital part of each scene, a torrential, dancing flow that makes *2001* seem in retrospect to have approached the glutinous. The superb fight sequence quickly establishes the mood: in the derelict opera house, lit by huge shafts of light across its rubbish-strewn floor, two gangs confront each other gleefully and plunge into a ballet of dazzling violence, hurling each other through furniture and windows with slapstick enthusiasm. Urged on by, and often synchronised with, the thundering music of Rossini, their exhilaration then bursts out into the car-ride headlong through the night, scattering other traffic in wild panic and yelling with the sheer joy of speed. If there is any direct inheritance of the lessons learned during the shooting of *2001*, it lies in Kubrick's spectacular use of music in *Clockwork Orange*, where the soundtrack is as stirring as the photography: the William Tell Overture to accompany an orgy (twenty minutes rushing past in forty hilarious seconds), The Thieving Magpie to accompany a killing, and lovely, lovely Ludwig Van (beautifully arranged by Walter Carlos) to punctuate each phase of Alex's unsteady rise to certain power. There is even 'Singin' in the Rain', used rather as Kubrick used 'Try a Little Tenderness' and 'Auf Wieder-

sehen' in *Strangelove* to provide an ironic counterpoint to the events on the screen. With its connotations of betrayal, the song is the only indication at the end of *Clockwork Orange* that Alex's next series of outrages (attractively prefaced by the fantasy glimpse of his nude romp with a debutante beneath the approving gaze of Ascot racegoers) might have any conceivable limitation.

Finally, *Clockwork Orange* is a return to the Kubrick tradition of outstanding acting performances by his cast (necessarily somewhat muted in *2001*). Malcolm McDowell is ideal as Alex, whether required to fling his recalcitrant gang into the river in slow motion, cringe resentfully from authority, or face in growing horror the realisation that everything he values most in life is going to turn his stomach over from now on. His tortured face, encompassed by straps and wires, his eyelids held open by vicious clamps, is one of the most haunting sights the cinema has provided since the space wheel in *2001* or the brooding close-ups of Sterling Hayden in *Strangelove*.

The film is stolen, however, by Patrick Magee, playing what is in effect Alex's alter ego, the writer whose home is invaded and wife raped by Alex and his droogs. Magee's brand of intensity is familiar enough on the screen, but it is revitalised in *Clockwork Orange*: his abrupt cries at the table as he offers food to his increasingly nervous guest are as baroque and baleful as the involuntary shudders of the original Dr. Strangelove. As Magee enjoys his revenge, Beethoven blares out to swamp Alex's mind, and Kubrick's camera pulls back along a billiard table to reveal a whole contemplative, mellow scene of torture, one concludes, happily, that Kubrick justly deserves his reputation as the cinema's greatest perfectionist.

An interview with Stanley Kubrick, largely concerned with the themes and techniques of 'A Clockwork Orange', will be appearing in the Spring 1972 issue of SIGHT AND SOUND.

Alex (Malcolm McDowell) in battle with the cat-woman (Miriam Karlin)



Film REVIEWS



Fulton Mackay and Albert Finney in 'Gumshoe'

Gumshoe

The first thing to be said about *Gumshoe* (Columbia-Warner) is that it's an extraordinarily funny film, funny in a way that is neither patronising of its audience's intelligence nor complacent about its own. The second thing, that its humour is easier to describe than to categorise, though since—apart from the sheer wit of so much of the dialogue—its great strength lies in its ability to produce surprise twists in its already surprising variations on familiar themes and situations, it seems unfair to those who've not already seen it to spoil the fun with too much precise illustration. In other words, it's a film that's more satisfying to re-view than to review.

Gumshoe takes its title from the fantasy aspirations of its hero Eddie Ginley (Albert Finney), a Chandler-addict living in Liverpool's bedsitter belt, vaguely employed—between visits to the Labour Exchange—as a Bingo caller in a working men's club, dreaming of hitting the big time as a stand-up comic in Las Vegas and, in the twelve months since his Bacall-looking girlfriend Ellen (Billie Whitelaw) married his businessman brother (Frank Finlay), popping in for frequent chats with his demonstrably useless National Health psychiatrist. Somewhat uncertain of his own identity or usefulness, Eddie's conversation is largely made up of quotations from the people he would like to have been: Fifties rock-and-roll stars, Chandler again or, in his Fast Eddie mood, the hero of *The Hustler*. His style is a subtle combination of plagiarism and lucid self-parody ('It was my thirty-first birthday,' he announces in his best Bogart voice. 'Instead of staying

home to blow out my candles, I was at my psychiatrist's counting my marbles. The count was running slow.')

To celebrate his birthday, Eddie runs a joke Sam Spade advertisement in the Liverpool *Echo*, as a result of which he is summoned to the mysterious assignation where he gets his first glimpse of a man who uncannily resembles Sidney Greenstreet, and is handed a packet ('A gun, a grand and a girl—that's the kind of world I move in') intended for a professional gangster. Thereafter, to Eddie's disbelief and mounting panic, his fantasy world springs into incongruous life. The local Mafia apparently run him out of the Bingo business (the poor man's numbers racket?); the girls he meets all turn out to be beautiful behind their mandatory spectacles; a corpse appears in his flat; and a mysterious divorcée and a dourly betrilbyed Scotsman respond to his throwaway Chandlerisms as if they really lived through *The Big Sleep* every night. Rapidly discovering that the best way to get out of a 'movie' situation is to hit people with the movie clichés they recognise, Eddie marshals his feeble resources (an ex-Teddy boy, an unemployed burglar and his own vicarious experience) and rounds up a quartet of villains who prove to be no more experienced in crime than he is in detection. 'What a crummy lot they were,' he murmurs, as he contentedly settles down to some quality crime with his dog-eared green Penguin of *The Thin Man*.

If *Gumshoe* never risks turning into mere parody or flaccid homage, this is because, rather as in the earliest New Wave films, the clichés it playfully invokes (both iconographical and semiological, or, to put it less pompously, both the trench-coats and the stridently menac-

ing string score) are as much a reflection on themselves as on the past. The film acknowledges—and it's the first British film to do so successfully—that Hollywood clichés are part of the reality of most people's imaginings and posturings; and from the opening shot, with the location LIVERPOOL spelled out in Forties type over the standard postcard view, it delicately balances a simple nostalgia with a more complex consciousness of all that nostalgia implies. Cumulatively and unpretentiously, it explores the regrets and ambitions in the cracks of its characters' would-be cool façades. From the conjurers, singers and belly dancers (genuine ones) in the Bingo club, to the boss with his empty talk of taking Eddie to the top and his collection of forged signed photos of the stars, to Eddie himself, with his trench-coat, fedora and Buddy Holly records, *Gumshoe* locates its characters in that unsettling terrain where youthful dreams survive the death of youthful optimism.

'What do you want to do,' inquires the psychiatrist. 'I want to write *The Maltese Falcon*, I want to record "Blue Suede Shoes", and I want to play Las Vegas,' comes the jokey but not so joking reply. The film's nostalgia, like its hero's, casts an eclectically wide net; but behind the wisecracks and the sentimental memories lurks a numbed disappointment that is the more convincing for never being expressed. The romantic ramifications of Eddie's relationship with Ellen are reflected only in their rare seconds of silence, while the film's one poignant moment comes at the end of Eddie's hilarious brief encounter with a former schoolfriend, when a lingering shot of the Dinky toys he's collecting 'for the lad' suggests the other, not-so-fantastic dream that Eddie has failed to realise.

As *Gumshoe* Ginley, Albert Finney gives a superlative performance, and the fact that the character's constant shifts of style and personality never become irritating owes a good deal to his ability to convey the pain and weariness that lie beneath the ebullient surfaces of the failed exhibitionist. Yet despite the obvious virtuoso aspect of Finney's characterisation, it's hard to view the film other than as an unusually felicitous piece of teamwork. Andrew Lloyd Webber's ersatz Forties score cleverly manipulates the audience even when humouring them with its extravagant parodies; Neville Smith's script is dazzlingly good and unassumingly literate; and the casting, with Fulton Mackay stealing several scenes with his laconic impersonation of a Glasgow tough, is impeccable.

That so many separate talents emerge so distinctly yet so harmoniously is perhaps the greatest compliment to Stephen Frears, whose self-effacing direction is all the more remarkable

Finney as *Gumshoe* Ginley





'Walkabout': David Gumpilil, Lucien John, Jenny Agutter

in a first feature film. He has discreetly imposed on his material two things sadly lacking in the British cinema of late: charm, and a thought-out consistency of style. Instead of the self-love that emerges via the works of Ken Russell, Frears' film communicates, and stimulates, a great love of the cinema.

JAN DAWSON

Walkabout

One of the best slogans I ever saw was painted on a ruined gable-end in Paddington. It read: 'More Anthropology Less Revolution'. It came to mind during Nicolas Roeg's *Walkabout* (Fox). One searches first for comparisons with other films about the Australian outback. There haven't been so many, and the fact that Ted Kotcheff's *Outback* appeared in England in the same month is a strange coincidence. But Roeg's film is not really concerned with Australia itself, as Kotcheff's is. Rather he has chosen it, it seems, as a vivid example of two opposed cultures living side by side: the Europeanised, metropolitan Aussie and the Aboriginal. The real comparison is with his and Donald Cammell's earlier film, *Performance*. Even there the cultures—principally 'straight' and criminal, with all the questions that begs—were symbiotic: they preyed on one another, they lived on one another. *Walkabout* in a sense goes further, since the cultures are mutually exclusive. They derive no comfort from one another, achieve no understanding. Their meeting leads to inevitable tragedy and disintegration. The first, the modern and metropolitan, is irredeemably dismissive of the second, the aboriginal, and that in turn is too primitive to be flexible.

The word 'primitive' of course begs all questions, and it might be fair to say that the film is an attempt to define it anew. The story is simple enough. A middle-aged Sydney businessman, oppressed by city life, drives his two children, a 14-year-old daughter (Jenny Agutter) and a 6-year-old son (Lucien John) out into the desert, apparently for a picnic. Once there, however, he tries but fails to shoot them before successfully committing suicide. They wander off aimlessly and are fortunate to find a water hole and a few berries. When this source is exhausted they encounter an aboriginal boy (David Gumpilil) on his 'walkabout'—an extended manhood trial involving months of single-handed survival in the outback. He takes them under his protection, steering them away from contact with whites, providing for them,

instructing them in the arts of survival. At an abandoned homestead the Aborigine begins a ritual courtship dance which must end only with his acceptance by the girl. She refuses to understand, scarcely disguising her relief that they appear to be within reach of her civilisation once more. He dances all night. In the morning they find him hanging in a tree, dead. The girl and her brother, unperturbed, make their way to a nearby road and thence to a settlement where, though coldly received, they are returned to the city. Years later the girl, now married, is seen to greet her husband after his hard day at the office, exactly as her mother must have done. He talks of promotion. She dreams of the outback.

There are obvious dangers in turning such an outline into a credulous fable which would accommodatingly digest all manner of fashionable preoccupations: pollution, population, angst, alienation. The gamut of pundits, from Lévi-Strauss through Lorenz to McLuhan, one might feel, has been well run; and indeed the film doesn't altogether escape, at two viewings, from the suspicion that at least some of the charges might stick in an unsympathetic court. The rather pointed radio programmes discussing *pâté de foie gras*, etiquette for the housewife, maths by radio, the absurd elocution lessons the girl has in school, smack heavily of the scriptwriter Edward Bond's obsessive hand. Never one to poke you with his sword when he can use a battleaxe, he may be the one who labours the comparison between killing and eating meat on the hoof and its refined city equivalent.

What makes the film triumph over this literalness is another kind of intensity which one feels, since it's a film-maker's, is all Roeg's. Metaphors which might otherwise be lumpish take wing by the grace of his eye and ear. Whoever devised it—and I may be doing Bond a great injustice—the moment when the little boy's tongue flicks out to pick up salt from the palm of a hand says all that need be said about our animal links, and it is convincing that the boy, being closer to the natural by virtue of his age, is more easily able than his sister to adapt to aboriginal life. He communicates unaffectedly by signs with the Aborigine, while she is unable to devise a better way of instructing him in English than to bark commands at him.

Similarly, a rich soundtrack, built up partly from the babel of the electronic village, partly from animal cries, partly from Stockhausen's *Hymnen*, appropriately deepens the references Roeg is making with the camera. The little boy slides down a sandhill and the sand closes over his path, leaving no trace. He and his sister,

sleeping exhausted under a flower-embroidered net, seem to sink into the desert, to become, in sleep, a part of nature, borrowing some of the rock's immobility, breathing into it a little of their own life. Reptiles, photographed in close-up, tower like friendly dinosaurs while the boy's war-toys shrink into pettiness, taking the idea of man's wars with them. The sun, gorgeous, orange and massive, swims above the rim of the world, menacingly explosive. It's beautiful all right, and we are almost swept up by the Housman quotation which accompanies the city-pent epilogue:

'That is the land of lost content,
I see it shining plain,
The happy highways where I went
And cannot come again.'

But only almost. Such an idyll cannot be taken neat. From anthropology Roeg and Bond descend to mere revolution. That pleasurable complexity is betrayed by this simple conservationist message. If the film suddenly slumps into setting social problems and answering them, then we must ask other questions too. What innocence is lost? Is survival of the fittest an agreeable social plan? How else control disease, promote hygiene, comfort; the arts of culture as distinct from survival? The questions don't belong to the best parts of *Walkabout*, and neither do the answers. The savage is not noble, the sophisticate not corrupt. Trying to prove it, one way or another, in the face of the camera's evidence, would be a betrayal of the film's real vision.

GAVIN MILLAR

Days and Nights in the Forest

Days and Nights in the Forest . . . the very title rings with enchantment, and the old Ray magic is soon at work again. This time the spell is a rug spread out in the sun, a picnic by the river, a charmingly silly parlour-game. Nothing much happens during this key sequence, but the setting holds the same promise of peace and fulfilment as the garden with the sun rippling over the girl on the swing in *Charulata*, the music room emerging from its chrysalis of disuse in *Jalsaghar*, or the snowy peak appearing from behind the mists in *Kanchenjunga*. Elsewhere the problems of the world may hang heavy, but not in these oases where Ray's characters, their dreams and their surroundings merge in a harmony that momentarily suspends time.

Once again the familiar comparisons spring to mind: Chekhov for the comedy of pretensions and the tragedy of lost opportunity, Henry James for the sense of feelings, confessions, explanations, reverberating beneath a moment of silence. But the odd fact remains that whereas it would be impossible to detach Chekhov's characters, or indeed James's, from their very precise social contexts, Ray's characters seem to belong so essentially to no other time than their own that they could step quite easily out of *Charulata* into *Days and Nights in the Forest*, bridging three-quarters of a century in the process. Partly, of course, this is because aspects of Victoriana have survived quaintly in Indian life; partly because Ray has a respect for traditional (especially cultural) values which is hardly shared by modern society; but mostly because he withdraws so determinedly from the tempo of this technological age that time becomes almost as important a factor in his films as it is with Resnais (though in a very different way).

Days and Nights in the Forest (Contemporary) opens, for instance, with a car journey as four young men from Calcutta set off for a holiday in the country. We are given no idea how far they are going, nor how long the drive has taken them. One moment they are pausing for petrol, the next they are pulling up before an invitingly empty rest-house. Even the long-held shot of the forest flashing by gives less an impression of speed than of an alien landscape which is

waiting, hostile and impenetrable, to baffle the intruder. And yet the sequence as a whole is a lengthy one, because Ray uses the incidents and frustrations of the journey as a perfect excuse to explore his characters at leisure.

Hari brooding irritably over a broken love affair, Sanjoy quietly reading in a corner, the irrepressible Sekhar joking and bouncing about, Ashim taking the wheel and surveying life with lordly amusement. These deft little observations at first seem like amusing character notations, no more; but as soon as the four men automatically pair off to occupy the two rooms at the rest-house, one realises that Ray has not only defined each man perfectly, but given an exact gauge of his limits and capacities. Reverting to school terminology, one might see Ashim as the head prefect, brilliant and self-assured, and Sanjoy as the quiet boy who admires but does not aspire to emulate him; Hari as the handsome sporting hero, who chums up with the scatter-brained Sekhar because he is too dull-witted to be irritated like everyone else by the latter's shrill, ingratiating eagerness to be popular. This almost scientific classification is important because it suggests that Ashim is the only one of the four with sufficient strength of character, as well as the intellectual capacity, to profit from their time out from time in a world of almost perfect stasis. A summer's day, a forest clearing, two women strolling wistfully in a shady avenue, love and the need for love echoing as plangently as the mysterious sound that haunts *The Cherry Orchard*.

Parenthetically, but still pursuing the theme of time, it is interesting that the most frequent criticism levelled against Ray by his detractors is that his films are too slow, and by his admirers, that he cannot handle melodrama (e.g. much of *Abhijan*, the end of *Mahanagar*, the assault on Hari in *Days and Nights in the Forest*). Opposite ends of the same candle, these criticisms arise because Ray's cinema is essentially one of contemplation in which both he and his characters like to ponder first, act afterwards. A good illustration is the scene in *Days and Nights in the Forest* where the four young men wake up after a heavy night of drinking to find they have overslept a formal invitation to breakfast. Dismally aware of their breach of etiquette, but unaware that their hosts know all about the reason for it, the hangdog quartet trail off to make their apologies. But time has not frozen on the social gaffe in their hosts' home as it has for them: the old man is singing his devotions, his daughter is busy with a book, his little grandson with a game. And as they—and the film—wait for the song to end, unwilling to be so graceless as to interrupt, the moment is miraculously bridged so that an apology is no longer necessary and the crisis is reduced to its proper proportions as a joke.

Time, in this sense, plays a key role throughout the film, since it not only creates the comedy of embarrassments which bursts the balloon of Ashim's pomposity—confronting him with the ladies whenever his debonair self is most absurdly compromised—but allows him to profit by his experiences. For time, in effect, stands still between the flashback near the beginning where we see a supercilious Ashim at a cocktail party while Aparna hovers in the background, and the moment at the end when she scribbles her telephone number for him on a five-rupee note. In between these two points, the Ashim whom Aparna says she didn't even want to meet because he was so conceited disappears; he becomes a new person, forced to acknowledge his own shallowness in the face of suffering, and with whom Aparna, one might say, falls in love at first sight.

The theme is brilliantly extended and completed by the two main subplots involving Hari and Sanjoy (Sekhar, being essentially a hanger-on, has no subplot of his own). For Sanjoy, a weaker version of Ashim, already so overwhelmed by self-doubt that he is fully aware of his inadequacies, time provides not a long hiatus

but a brief moment of affirmation. The young widow, with whom he has been dabbling in a flirtation bordering on love, makes him a gift of herself and her need; but he hesitates, and is lost.

Hari, on the other hand, is the exact opposite of Ashim and Sanjoy, and his place in Ray's scheme is one of disruption rather than eventual harmony. Already, in the early flashback of his quarrel with his fiancée in Calcutta, he is revealed as a man of impulse, of action rather than reflection; and everything he does in the film—his passion for 'Miss India', his accusation of the servant—shows him jumping the gun, plunging into action before time has had its say. Hence (time is out of joint) the disruptive melodrama of the attack on Hari in the forest by the aggrieved servant.

I could go on endlessly about the subtle correspondances which underlie the film, supporting its intricately formal structure, but one will have to suffice. Just as preparations for the picnic are completed, Hari is standing a little apart, brooding unhappily on the river bank. Aparna comes to summon him, but as he rejoins the party, she pauses for a moment, almost unconsciously taking his place and pose to stare out over the river. Suddenly, jumping like an electric spark between them, one sees his self-pity ignite in her as compassion. Then she returns to the picnic, and the moment passes, to lie dormant until she finally manages to fan it alive again in Ashim. Of such moments are poetic masterpieces made.

TOM MILNE



'Days and Nights in the Forest': Sharmila Tagore, Robi Ghose, Soumitra Chatterjee

The Shooting

GASHADE: *I don't see no point to it.*
WOMAN: *There isn't any.*

The story of Monte Hellman's *The Shooting* (Ember) is an elusive and deliquescent uncertainty, a bright mirage above shifting planes of supposition. A quartet of characters drifts together in the desert in a conventionally indeterminate Western period and setting, and they ride with a somnambulist sense of compulsion along a trail that leads them at last to a man on the run. It's difficult to be more specific about the narrative without venturing into speculation, but one might hazard that the unnamed woman who heads the group is intent on avenging the death of a child, and that her quarry is related to (indeed the twin of) the

bounty hunter she has employed to guide her through the unknown terrain. It would appear that the two relatives are killed in the final exchange of shots.

For those who like their Westerns straight, and no nonsense, *The Shooting* is best left alone despite its evident merits as a Western—the startling bursts of action, the monosyllabic conversations, the methodical progress towards predestined hostilities. Its construction is not unlike that of the children's puzzle carried by one of the doomed men in the group: compact, circular, an enclosed picture with scooped hollows into which the steady hand and the elastic patience might briefly roll a few grains of buckshot. No sooner has everything dropped into place than the game starts again, a tiny universe of quicksilver atoms, spinning and purposeless. Hellman's view of things, on this evidence, is both nihilistic and fatalistic; our lives and deaths may be no more than a series of accidents, but they conform to a pattern that has been determined outside our control and comprehension. We are unknowingly part of a game that has rules only to be guessed at and which may well have nothing to do with logic. We must make the best we can of the shapes that form and disintegrate around us.

The fun to be had from *The Shooting* lies in the process of capturing its fleeting scraps of information as they skim past and guiding them into place on a surface as pitted as a solitaire board. Given, for instance, that it's a film about a man being hunted, it can be seen as the story of one man, not two. Will Gashade, leaving a

clear trail of flour for his trackers to follow, assumes the blame for having been unable to save his partners, and having faced up to his own guilt, kills himself. The woman and her accompanying gunman, in this version, would assume the convenient role of agents of death, Cocteau fashion. And as in Cocteau, their victim prefers his death to have some meaning, if only one of compensation—which is why (one might infer) Gashade puts the professional gunman out of action but is unable to deflect the enigmatic woman from her mission. Interpretation running wild? Maybe, and yet the first materialisation of the woman suggests emphatically that Gashade is facing a supernatural force: awaiting the expected but unknown visitor, he glances momentarily at a buzzard in the sky, and when he looks back at the

brow of the hill the woman is standing there, contemplating him with impassive arrogance. It's an encounter that echoes the shoreline scenes Hellman contributed to *The Terror*, where a witch-woman stares at the hero across a jumble of rocks and waves and almost seduces him into drowning himself. Corman's survivors were the young and innocent, but Hellman's, on the contrary, are the figures of retribution; the final image of *The Shooting* is of the gunman staggering on his way, an endless vista of impersonal killings imaginably ahead of him.

Or one can see the film, less pretentiously perhaps, as the surviving fragments of some other story, long since lost. Like *Ride in the Whirlwind*, which Hellman and Jack Nicholson were making simultaneously, its genesis lay in the diaries of cowmen, settlers, and prospectors of the early West, whose references and recollections hinted at dramas of which only the desert itself knew the outcome. A woman's family is destroyed, by accident or design, and she has nothing left to live for but the eradication of the men responsible; the trail leads to Gashade's camp, and to be sure of her prey she must persuade Gashade and his companion to accompany her in pursuit of the missing member of the group. Yet even this plausible story structure has its curiosities. Why, for example, does Gashade need to lay the trail to ensure that he is followed, when the woman and her hired gun already know the location of his camp (having shot the superbly named Leland Drum there the night before)? Where, for that matter has Gashade been? And what was in the letter entrusted by the woman to the bearded man she had sent after the fugitive and who is later found dying in the sun? It grows increasingly like a spy thriller in which, by some printer's oversight, half the pages are blank.

Failing possession of the answers, one must settle for the rich fragments themselves. With hardly an exception (some unhelpful shots of a circle to signify the heat of the sun, some exchanges of dialogue so colloquial as to be unintelligible), they are more than enough justification for rating Hellman's work very highly. As menace approaches Gashade's camp, the camera glides around him to watch Coley, his ingenuous partner, running for cover with a flour-sack, its contents strewn into the air like smoke behind him; as the horses die off in the desert, the camera holds an endless shot of two men on one mount, jogging listlessly in a limbo without perspectives. The scene in which Gashade is forced at gunpoint to leave Coley behind in the desert, and the later one in which Coley, having incautiously tried to join the group once more, is pursued and shot, also find Hellman a master in the art of putting his camera, quite unpredictably, in the right place at the right time. He matches the absorbing imprecision of his subject with a spectacular precision of technique; and if there needs to be a point to *The Shooting*, this, surely, is enough.

PHILIP STRICK

Straw Dogs

If sheer skill in film-making were enough, *Straw Dogs* (Cinerama) could probably be hailed unassailably as Peckinpah's best film to date: an astonishing parabola of terror in which the pale horse of the Apocalypse hovers grimly over a quiet Cornish farmhouse. And yet there is an uncomfortable gap at the centre of the film which leaves one—or perhaps I should say me—uninvolved and unmoved in a way no other Peckinpah film has done.

Straw dogs, we are told, are the brainchild of an ancient Chinese philosopher, sacrificial substitutes who 'were treated with the greatest deference before they were used as an offering, only to be discarded and trampled upon as soon as they had served their purpose'. So when the American astro-mathematician (Dustin Hoff-



'Straw Dogs': Dustin Hoffman

man) arrives on a sabbatical in darkest Cornwall, one knows what to expect. As befits a stranger in a strange land, he is kept at a distance by the villagers with a long-handled spoon manipulated with a mixture of mockery and awe; his English wife (Susan George), being a native of the place, is humiliated and cast aside after a ruthless gang-rape; and he himself, gradually discovering what is happening to him, is finally cornered into defending, even at the cost of five appalling deaths, a dubious principle.

The ironies, quite apart from the focal theme that violence breeds violence, are there for the asking. Most notably, that the ivory-towerish professor left America partly to escape the kind of unreasoning violence he now has to confront in both himself and the Cornishmen; and that if he is a victim of xenophobic ignorance, then so in a sense are they. Not so much because, in rushing to his defence of the homicidal village idiot which sparks off the final holocaust, he is jumping to precisely the hasty conclusions and blind violence he believes himself to be fighting, as because he acts primarily from a primitive instinct to defend his own territory, his home, against invasion.

At times, indeed, there is a touch of the horror film about *Straw Dogs*, as Hoffman shuts himself away in his castle with his terrified wife and the whimpering idiot whom he has offered sanctuary, while outside the forces of evil batter at his defences. But what has all this to do with straw dogs? What, in fact, are these straw dogs sacrificial substitutes for? With the exception of the murder of the cat, found hanging in a clothes closet as either a grim taunt or a mysterious warning, the whole film evolves on such a mundane level of cause and effect that there really seems to be no answer. (One might, of course, argue that the straw dogs are not human but moral—the alibis people offer themselves for their violence—but it doesn't feel right somehow.) The psychological motivation is crisp and strictly logical: Hoffman is cool and intellectual and self-sufficient, therefore he is kept on the outside edge of the mocking village circle; his wife is flirtatious, uncertain, sexually drawn to an old flame, therefore she is raped; a girl from the village is found dead, therefore the idiot is hunted, therefore Hoffman intervenes, therefore . . .

Perhaps all I am saying is that I miss the quality of legend in Peckinpah's earlier films, the quality of inevitability as his characters are driven haplessly to their destiny by their own myths. Both they and the audience know, or half know, exactly where they are headed and that there is nothing they can do about it

except 'enter their house justified' like Steve Judd, or prepare to die a clean death, like Pike Bishop. At the end of *Straw Dogs*, Hoffman emerges from his dark tunnel of violence to drive the village idiot safely home, leaving five mutilated bodies littered around his house. Smiling contentedly to himself, he picks his way through the foggy darkness, and as the idiot apologetically murmurs, 'I don't know my way home,' he simply grins reassuringly and replies, 'That's all right, nor do I.' In one sense, this perfectly sums up the ambivalence of the film's circle of violence (does Hoffman emerge into light or into darkness?). In another, it suggests that Hoffman neither knows where he is going nor where he has been morally, and rings a little like the 'So what?' with which one reacts, once the initial impact of horror has died away, to a newspaper account of some mysterious tragedy.

Curiously enough, the quality I find lacking is actually present in Gordon Williams' original novel, *Siege at Trencher's Farm*, but has been filtered out in the process of adaptation. Two themes in particular are missing: the years of in-breeding among the villagers, fostering a tightly knit community coloured in various ways by the threat of madness; and the mysterious murder in the field years ago, a secret jealously guarded by the inhabitants almost as a fetish keeping them alive and in thrall. Here, hemmed in by oblique hints of ritual murder, the two visitors really are straw dogs, sacrificial victims who cause the heavens to fall by refusing to accept their appointed role.

This said, however, *Straw Dogs* is a magnificent piece of craftsmanship, building coldly from a deliberately hesitant opening (awkward cuts, moves, dialogue transitions as Dustin Hoffman stumbles perplexedly through his first encounter with the mysterious rites of English village life), to the razor-sharp cross-cutting at the church social (where everything comes to a point with the murder of the girl), and the final manic assault on the senses of the ending. I can think of no other film which screws violence up into so tight a knot of terror that one begins to feel—like standing in a church listening to the throbbing bass notes of an organ rock the very foundations—that civilisation is crumbling before one's eyes. The pity of it is that the reverberations cease with the film.

TOM MILNE

Family Life

Realism in the cinema has come a long way since Zavattini's woman buying a pair of shoes. In the last few years in Britain, possibly as a reaction against the sentimental romanticism of Free Cinema, realist cinema has been characterised by a fundamental pessimism, the very antithesis of the post-war Italians' brave confidence in the miraculous potential of the man in the street. Films as variously in touch with reality as *Up the Junction*, *The Whisperers*, *Kes*, have created their own iconography: depressed suburbia, bleak industrial wastelands, the seedy bureaucracies of schools, hospitals, labour exchanges. A kind of negative didacticism prevails, engendered in the spate of television 'documentary' plays about the rejects of an affluent society.

Ken Loach's *Family Life* (MGM-EMI) is a fairly typical example. It began life as a television play, *In Two Minds* by David Mercer, a case history of a girl's mental illness constructed out of interviews (by an unseen camera 'voice') with the girl and her parents. For the big screen (and why it's on the big screen in these days of media interdependence is a good question) Mercer has expanded his original play, writing in an extra character and a few scenes where 'action' rather than talk predominates. The basic interview format has been retained, with the difference that the 'voice' is now a

three-dimensional character—a sympathetic psychiatrist—a visual identification which in itself amounts to an implicit admission that the cinema is somehow less immediate than the television screen.

It's not difficult to see what attracted Loach to the subject. *Family Life* is an illustration of the controversial theories of the psychiatrist R. D. Laing: environment rather than inadequacies of self as the root cause of mental illness. Like *Kes*, Loach's new film is an indictment of a society straitjacketed by norms. It opens with a suburban panorama, row upon row of statutory sameness in the now familiar metaphor for environmental conformity. We then cut to a London underground station, where a girl sits numbly watching the trains go by until someone decides to remove her. She is escorted home by the police, which starts her parents asking questions. Gradually, as the girl, Jan (Sandy Ratcliff), and her parents (Bill Dean and Grace Cave) talk to a psychiatrist, it emerges that she is mildly schizophrenic. Her case history unfolds episodically: an unexceptional lower middle-class background; parents who have done everything for her except allow her the luxury of her own inclinations; from herself a respect for her parents' will arising partly out of love, partly out of a reluctance to follow her elder sister in severing relations with them. From this has developed a gradual deterioration in her own self-respect, characterised by casual affairs, an unstable relationship with her current boyfriend, an unwanted abortion, and a progressive mental detachment.

This progress from occasional distractedness to advanced schizophrenia and finally total withdrawal is charted with a harrowing inevitability. And every stage in Jan's decline is shown to be prompted by a wilful adherence to conventional modes of behaviour, whether familial (her parents project their own unadmitted failures on to her) or medical (the 'progressive' psychiatrist, whose group therapy methods seem to be helping Jan, is replaced by a hospital board decision which blithely ignores the success of those methods). Her only positive response is from her boyfriend, whose temporary encouragement stems less from understanding Jan than from his own vaguely defined hostility to authoritarianism, clumsily symbolised by his and Jan's spray-painting of her father's garden gnomes.

Jan is last seen as a lecture theatre guinea pig, seeming by her mute withdrawal almost to acquiesce in the psychiatrist's pronouncement that there are no discernible environmental factors in her case. The film is a depressingly convincing demonstration of the howling inaccuracy of that diagnosis; nearly every scene has been a stage in the elaboration of a point of view diametrically opposed to this traditional analysis. In their interviews with the sympathetic psychiatrist, and in their stumbling attempts to communicate with their errant daughter, Jan's parents reveal themselves as inflexible bigots hamstrung by their own inhibitions. Her mother is a classic demonstration of the stifling vacuity of suburban gentility, registering dismay at every deviation from her own circumscribed norms, shocked into comment, for instance, when the psychiatrist's secretary actually calls him by his Christian name; her father, who admits to the indiscretion of marrying above his own point on the social scale, also admits—with a barely suppressed tinge of regret—to a lack of sexual satisfaction in his marriage (his wife is 'not like that' because she had 'a good upbringing').

That Jan's illness is rooted in her 'failure' to respond to environmental pressures is established beyond doubt; and in the film's episodic framework, established to devastating effect. One's misgivings about *Family Life* stem not so much from its accuracy as a clinical case history as from its way of assembling the 'facts' of that case history. Inevitably schematic in its structuring of these facts, the film undermines its

persuasively realist centre by overstating its case. Jan's parents are immediately recognisable as types; and paradoxically, that is precisely what obstructs one's belief in them as real people. Like the sportsmaster in *Kes* (though admittedly less energetically), the actors have been encouraged to play to a preconceived notion of people as types, recognisable certainly but recognisable for their caricatural accuracy rather than the picture they present of the infinite unpredictability of real people. The result is a kind of scripted improvisation which rings only partly true because one is constantly aware that the characters are activating conditioned reflexes in one's own mind (the traditionalist psychiatrist is white-coated; the gnome-painting episode comes immediately after a cosy denunciation of the horrors of suburban conformity, and so on). *Family Life* is a lot more 'real' than the overrated *Kes*; but a film which has prejudice as its theme doesn't gain from playing on the prejudices of its audience.

DAVID WILSON

Traffic

Tati's move from the village to the big city, via the Paris suburbs of *Mon Oncle*, has been greeted with a predictable chorus of critical dismay. *Playtime* seemed his final turning away from a comic tradition indigenous to the French cinema since Pagnol, the satirical-affectionate portrait of village life, and signified the end of 'the Tati whose postmen, small boys and dogs were such a source of delight'. Over-reacting to this transition, critics summarily pigeonholed *Playtime* as an anti-modernity satire, another film about man dwarfed and dehumanised by the glass-and-steel monsters he has erected, failing to see that, as an artist, Tati draws no distinction between life in the city and life in the village. Man finds the same challenge, even encouragement, to his good humour, observation and capacity to improvise in the concrete jungle, or on the

motorway, as he does in the vagaries of provincial life. Tati's humour has always been creative, rather than merely observant, and the closing shots of *Playtime*—the congested roundabout backed by fairground carousel music, the bus levitating in a window reflection to an exclamatory chorus from its passengers—embrace the challenge of the urban maze by exhorting us, 'The modern city is here to stay: you can't beat it, so join it.'

That sequence also paves the way for *Traffic* (Columbia-Warner). The film was originally a joint project by Tati and the Dutch film-maker Bert Haanstra. Whatever the reasons for Haanstra's departure, the collaboration was unlikely to have proved ideal. Haanstra's comic vision is essentially malicious, the art of catching human beings off their guard at an instinctive behaviouristic low, while Tati's is a celebration of man's struggle to transcend the indignities of life. (Tati has said that Hulot's own walk indicates the wish to 'have one's nose in the stars', even if one's feet are firmly earthbound.)

Stylistically, *Playtime* and *Traffic* reflect Tati's description of his films as an 'invitation to the public to come with me behind the camera'. Tati is showing us how to look at the world creatively, and his favourite method of bringing the environment to life, of humanising the twentieth century, is by transforming whatever is hostile or amorphous into something surrealistically recognisable. During the crossroads pile-up in *Traffic*, a car pursues its detached front wheel with its bonnet flapping up and down like some ravenous beast of prey; a hippy's woolly jacket masquerades as a dead pekinese; and in the film's funniest sequence, M. Hulot, attempting to scale the front of a house, detaches an entire wall of ivy which sags like a false beard and defies all his gymnastic attempts to hitch it up from the top of an adjacent tree. These scenes are in the classic Tati tradition.

But while defending the consistency of Tati's vision as a humorist, it has to be admitted that *Traffic* is a fitful and disappointing successor to *Playtime*. Part of the reason is the almost exclusive reliance on quick, one-shot gags.

'Family Life': Grace Cave, Sandy Ratcliff





'A New Leaf': Elaine May, Walter Matthau

Some of these are good (an official demonstrating the latest snap-shut car bonnet is seen to sport a heavily bandaged middle finger), but many are as hurriedly and carelessly executed as the film's deplorable polyglot dubbing. Tati's plots have always been tenuous threads linking a disparate succession of jokes, but at least the four 'movements' of *Playtime* allowed room for the development of extended gags within an episodic format (Hulot vainly pursuing a business colleague through a maze of office cubicles, watched by an omniscient overhead camera). In *Traffic* the extended or recurring joke is a rarity. Those that do occur—harassed motor show functionaries seeking periodic refuge in a cardboard birch forest with tape-recorded birdsong, the survivors of the pile-up emerging from their cars to perform silent callisthenics by the roadside, Hulot's adventures with the ivy—show Tati at his surrealistic best, richly expanding (or refining) a slender joke beyond its initial promise. Finally, though, such sequences only aggravate one's impatience at the fragmented, hit-or-miss quality of the rest of the film.

NIGEL ANDREWS

A New Leaf

Stage, television and nightclub comedienne Elaine May comes out as film writer-director-star, and turns in a somewhat indefinite performance, at once original and broadly derivative. One safe assertion is that she is unlikely to be accused of a quick surrender to fashion, as was her former partner in the comedy team of Nichols and May. The stylistic facility that earned Mike Nichols an Academy Award on his second movie is not part of Miss May's equipment. *A New Leaf* (Paramount) has that rather plain and graceless look which combines the functional needs of stage and television comedy. Admittedly there is some dabbling with more respected models—the film opens with a visual gag of a type refined by Buster Keaton, and the storyline itself is vaguely reminiscent of Keaton's *Seven Chances*. But then the tragedy of Henry Graham, middle-aged bachelor and profligate of a now exhausted private income, and his efforts to find a marriageable heiress, to appropriate the fortune and then dispose of its owner, has its own classic status which Elaine May chooses not to update, or at least only for occasional and very specific comic effect.

But to emphasise the old-fashioned air of the material, or its over cautious and theatrical treatment, would obscure as much here as the reaction against their up-to-the-minute trends distorts the qualities of Nichols' films. *A New Leaf* keeps the current phobias of American comedy firmly out of sight, with a rigour of approach that is more than just the artificially airtight conventions of its story. The society inhabited by Henry Graham, all hyper-refined and aristocratic tedium, has a perverse dislocation from any American reality. It is blandly characterised by Henry's vaguely English but perfectly generalised activities at his club, a languid canter along a bridle-path, or the exquisite boredom of hearing about the current blight in a friend's garden. Henry's one capable anchor to the world outside is the very English valet who compliments him at one moment with, 'You are keeping alive a tradition that was dead before you were born,' and reminds him at the next that, 'In this country, there is no genteel poverty.' (Both lines aptly anticipated by the scene where Henry, after hearing of his financial downfall, drives his red Ferrari through a ghetto neighbourhood of New York, oblivious to his surroundings, while intoning to himself 'I'm poor, I'm poor'.)

This cultural joke at the centre of the film, a wrenching and rearranging of social contexts—*The Great Gatsby* as written by P. G. Wodehouse—conditions its response to the characters. Peculiarly isolated and plainly ridiculous in their situation and their private obsessions, they are still permitted to be discreetly real in their absurdity. Henry Graham, splendidly incarnated by Walter Matthau, is at first a weary monolith of supercilious detachment. Only the constant complaint from the mechanics of his daily existence that 'there's carbon on the valves' wears away at his Olympian indifference to the details of living. Unneurotic in his apathy, as massively self-sufficient and vulnerable to the minutiae of existence as a dinosaur, he might have the mysterious allure of the Fitzgerald character, were it not for the fact that he lacks magic. A romantic egotist, he no longer sees any romance in enjoying his wealth, only an unquestioned and necessary habit.

He is matched by Henrietta Lowell (Elaine May), his eventual choice as the ideally stacked marriage partner, gauche, gawky, uncoordinated, socially a disaster area and personally totally absorbed in botanical pottering. The wistful, fierce integrity of these personalities, viewed with a detached amusement, allows the film to

bypass the usual agenda of subjects (sex, the System, etc.) of current comedy concerned with vanishing human identity, and lends a particular vivacity to the comic set-pieces. There is the scene between Henry and his bank manager, the latter struggling with infinite patience and not a trace of condescension to paint a picture of financial ruin for a belligerently uncomprehending Henry; or the dismissal of the servants, who have been blatantly exploiting Henrietta's dizzying unworldliness and have rightly guessed that Henry's is a marriage for his own convenience, but wrongly guessed he would accept them as allies.

In the last half-hour, the satirical distance and the cynical theme seem to be losing their grip, with Henry discovering a purpose in life in nurse-maiding his wife, and finally abandoning his murder plan and accepting his new role. The stage is set for the kind of happy ending that Mike Nichols was rapped over the knuckles for in *The Graduate*. But Henry's development reveals something not quite so rosy. He progresses from pillar of futility to bustling man of action, briskly reviving Henrietta's household while poring over books on toxicology, and eventually to defeated resignation. While Henrietta remains in a state of ignorance so blissful that it seems less than human, Henry returns to indolence with just a twinge of self-awareness.

The movement in fact is close to that of *The Graduate*, with the latter's furious acting out of roles, its bemused acceptance of the futility of both speech and action, and a final weary closing of the circle on a happy ending which is not quite that. Nichols' art suggests a ringmaster's display of 'turns', a parading of masks, while Miss May organises her entertainment with very conscious touches of theatrical artifice (the romantic props of country lane, full moon, golden sunset are whisked on and off very quickly), and has her characters act out their obsessions with touching intensity and showmanship.

RICHARD COMBES

Nicholas and Alexandra

One of the ironies of the calamitous reign of Nicholas the Second, pointed out by Robert Massie in his book, is that the gentle, pacific Tsar should have been dubbed 'Bloody Nicholas', while his fierce and bloodthirsty ancestors are remembered by kinder epithets. *Nicholas and Alexandra* (Columbia-Warner) contains another irony: that Franklin Schaffner, whose previous films have caught the ambivalence of arrogant and brutal heroes who had the power to set the world turning, should find in Nicholas an insufficient subject and finally lose him, in the course of a three-hour epic, somewhere in between the vast sprawl of events and the rather impersonal, Macchiavellian ideal of power politics dispensed by scriptwriter James Goldman.

A bold attempt is made to apply the method of an intimate epic to the collapse of the dynasty. So far as the film has any central protagonist it is the entire Romanov family, and as far as it has any dominant theme it is the withdrawal of the household from the world at large into the secret tragedy of the Tsarevich's illness. The horror of the imperial couple's powerlessness to deal with disasters in either sphere is characterised by an unstaunched flow of blood, by Alexis' accusation that his father, in signing away the dynasty, has denied him his life as well ('Instead, I just bleed'), and by the computation of the revolutionary Yakovlev of the Russian blood that Nicholas poured into the European war, six quarts to a man times the millions of lives lost. To explain the turmoil that broke the Romanovs, to justify their downfall as either an historical inevitability or the product of bizarre personalities and events (accepting Kerensky's statement

that 'without Rasputin, there could have been no Lenin') is a daunting task. Robert Massie invokes both Fate and History, and then settles for an explanation of Nicholas as a courageous and intelligent individual confronted by awesome circumstances.

The same middle of the road view underlies the film, which remains firmly in the personal sphere while detailing the early years of the reign of Nicholas and Alexandra—the birth of Alexis, the discovery of his haemophilia, Nicholas' combination of helpless vacillation and religious obduracy in matters of government, Alexandra's terror of the Russian court—with a fine balance between the nuances of character in script and performances and the sumptuous interior landscapes, quickly and unobtrusively established. Political events, oppression and revolutionary fervour swirl noisily but vaguely in the background, composed in brief, formal, expressive scenes where black, crowded bodies and mass excitement seethe through coolly monumental interiors, through the chamber of the Duma and in the working hovels of St. Petersburg, culminating in the Bloody Sunday massacre which Schaffner handles with characteristic flair, communicating a confusion and terror that eluded the indirect treatment of Cossack slaughter in *Dr. Zhivago*.

The problems begin with the introduction of the revolutionaries, and the necessity of conveying to some extent the content and meaning of their struggle. Here the script settles for a broadly caricatured, *Lion in Winter* view of the cut and thrust of personal antagonism and political advantage-seeking. The treatment of actual situations and historical events is greatly simplified—Nicholas' summary of the Balkan situation to his family in the middle of the night seems to come as close to deliberate self-parody as the mocking political catechisms of Anthony Harvey's film. Most of the antagonisms on this plane hum round terse epigrams on the necessity of seizing and holding power. Thus, despite some minor subtleties of characterisation (Lenin comes across as a nervous storehouse of intransigence) a kind of bland, unreflective identification is gradually formed between figures as disparate as Lenin and Kerensky.

The saddest failure though is Schaffner's inability to find a real centre for the film, and so achieve the kind of precarious constellation of forces that has formed round his protagonists in

the past. Patton, poised at just the right moment in history, in precisely the right place, and overwhelmed with the sense of this moment being 'like a planet, spinning off into the Universe', or the upheaval wrought by a Norman warlord, subverted by the ways of the 'marsh rabbits' he is sent to rule, are worlds away from the vague, shifting portrait at the centre of *Nicholas and Alexandra*. Ultimately, the film affords no grounds for affirming or denying Yakovlev's, and history's, final summation of Nicholas: 'You're not "Bloody Nicholas"! You're a man of no imagination.'

RICHARD COMBS

What's the Matter with Helen?

More than six years after *Baby Jane* and *Sweet Charlotte*, Aldrich's early exercises in nostalgic Grand Guignol, half horror film, half camp tribute to a decaying Hollywood, Curtis Harrington's *What's the Matter with Helen?* (United Artists) revives the formula with unexpected flair and style. *Helen* gets more mileage than either of its predecessors (leaving the 1969 Aldrich-produced *Whatever Happened to Aunt Alice?* out of the running, since it lacks the idiosyncratic Hollywood elements) from a genre that in Aldrich's hands seemed too narcissistic—too jokey, allusive and self-consciously lurid—to develop as an interesting branch of the horror film.

The story-line conforms to type. Two women, who have fled to Hollywood to escape the publicity of a Leopold-Loeb-type murder trial involving their sons, are pursued by sinister reminders of the past, 'phone calls, letters and intruders, until one finally cracks up and takes revenge on her companion. One conspicuous gain over the Aldrich films is that *Baby Jane* writer Henry Farrell has set his story not in some never-never post-Hollywood depression, with Bette Davis as an ageing child star on the rampage, but at the height of the dream era itself. A glimpse of a cinema advertising *The Black Cat* not only dates the story (circa 1934) but reminds us that the early 1930s were the heyday of Karloff and Lugosi as well as Harlow and Temple. On a purely visual level, this polarity provides fascinating alternations between the silver, soft-focus and Art Deco of the 1930s Hollywood dream (Lucien Ballard was Stern-

berg's photographer on *Morocco*) and the cloak-and-shadow of contemporary Gothic (Michael MacLiammóir's caped, portly and sinister presence clearly invoking Lugosi).

Harrington's liberal strewing of red herrings has the advantage of focusing our attention on every exotic character and scene (only in retrospect do nearly all emerge as peripheral or irrelevant) and the film is packed with fleeting tributes to the period: tango on a luxury yacht, an Amy Semple MacPherson hot gossipeller ('I offered you my blessing, but you refused it. Now move on.'), even a Tod Browning dwarf. When the heroines' flight to Hollywood ends in their founding a talent school for aspiring Shirley Temples, the stage is set for a horrific 'Kiddy-stars Revue', which features a Busby Berkeley staging of 'Animal Crackers' on a giant soup bowl, a Mae West number delivered with sultry panache by an 8-year-old and a glittering stars-and-stripes finale in front of a huge eagle surmounted by the initials N.R.A.

The wonder is that Harrington keeps the plot going amid all the bric-à-brac. But as he showed in *Games*, he has an ability to create tension without elaborate preparation. A judicious use of time-honoured thriller devices—overhead shots of characters mounting stairs, a Hitchcock-like crane shot that twice lifts us from a shot of Adelle and Lincoln necking in a car to a close-up of Helen staring vindictively from the window—turns on the suspense before we are effectively aware that anything is wrong. And although Farrell's story seems thin and meandering in retrospect, individual scenes are invariably well-staged (Harrington knows that conversations on stairways carry an extra menace) and the plot is unified by the striking use of recurrent images (dolls, mirror, scissors, the life-size cut-out Adelle). Hitchcock is the name that continually comes to mind, not because Harrington has produced a slavish pastiche, but because he knows how to unsettle an audience by purely filmic means. It remains to be seen what he could do with more ambitious material. Meanwhile, *What's the Matter with Helen?* provides considerable pleasure—not least in the performances of Debbie Reynolds and Shelley Winters as the heroines, and Michael MacLiammóir's scene-stealing, histrionically sinister drama teacher, purring Wildean epigrams and fulsomely introducing himself as 'Hamilton Starr. Two Rs, but prophetic nonetheless.'

NIGEL ANDREWS

London Festival 1971

from page 35

The race is never concluded, not just because it loses such point as it had once the drivers discover an almost fraternal solidarity in their endurance of fatigue and Southern hostility, but because the boys in the Chevvy are incapable of passing up any lesser challenge they meet on the road. The final shot is of celluloid burning itself up; and if the film works well enough as a metaphor for the purposelessness of competitive activity, a warning on the dangers of object-worship, and a description of the mean cultural prospects of small-town America, it's less happy as a symbolic confrontation between Young Drop-Out and Middle-Class Consumer, since the latter is characterised as a pathological liar.

Even stranger is the casting of a *Psychotically* twitching Anthony Perkins as the Last Hope for Christian Virtue in Stuart Rosenberg's miscalculated *WUSA* (Paramount). The principal characters are a ragbag assortment of drifters, failures and con-men, mak-

ing a desperate bid for stability and survival in a contemporary New Orleans beset by a virulent right-wing backlash. The sensitive stumble and founder (Joanne Woodward, as a woman living off her faded charms and doomed to exploitation, hangs herself in her cell after being caught with her neighbours' marijuana—another victim of police brutality; Perkins is kicked to death after shooting the wrong man at a right-wing rally). Only the unfeeling rhetoricians survive—Laurence Harvey's unlikely revivalist minister, and Paul Newman as the politicians' cynical mouthpiece. The film's plea for moderation and its indictment of a witch-hunting patriotism are unquestionably sincere; but its presentation of rioting crowds, corrupt political manipulators and exploitative black landlords is so ineptly clichéd as to render its message more numbing than conscience-stirring. The fall of the great or the virtuous may be tragic, but the extinction of the already fallen makes only for spectacle.

Easily the most interesting of the films is *Roller Derby* (Cinerama), a *cinéma-vérité* documentary about an indigenous sport

which combines the hazards of roller racing and all-in wrestling. As well as showing up the gladiatorial aspect (crowds yelling for blood as an amazing Amazon called Venus pulls out a rival's hair by the roots), director Robert Kaylor situates his subject geographically and sociologically by following Mike Snell, a married, 23-year-old factory worker who is scheming to leave his job and train for Roller Derby stardom. The sport is shown to be pointless, violent, even grotesque, but is then shown to offer one of the few escape routes still open to the working-class boy with ambitions. As Mike does the rounds, moving from the factory bench, to his pokey rented bungalow, to the loan company, to a night with the boys at a third-rate burlesque show, Kaylor forces home the realisation of just how impoverished his alternatives are. If Mike Snell emerges as the most effective symbol of America's new-found despair, it is precisely because Kaylor, less ambitious than the directors working in fictional forms, is content to establish his reality.

JAN DAWSON

BOOK REVIEWS

STANLEY KUBRICK DIRECTS

By Alexander Walker

HARCOURT BRACE JOVANOVIH,
NEW YORK, \$8.95

Stanley Kubrick's career is highly unusual for an American in that he became a movie director without any previous experience of, or involvement in, show business and without serving any industrial apprenticeship. A short useful period as a photo-journalist on *Look* and a couple of brief documentaries in the *March of Time* manner (which he sold to RKO) led to two independently produced low-budget films, partly financed by wealthy relatives, and thence to the prodigiously accomplished thriller *The Killing* (1956), which both made his name and established his complete mastery of the craft. (During the making of it he apparently fought and won battles with his cinematographer, who was no less than Lucien Ballard.) *Paths of Glory* fulfilled the great expectations that *The Killing* had created. Appearing at the same time as *Bridge on the River Kwai*, it represented the positive aspect of what Kubrick's admirers thought the cinema should be, to *Kwai*'s deadening negative.

Kubrick stood apart, and in retrospect stands even further apart, from most of his contemporaries who had moved on to Hollywood from the short-lived New York live TV drama boom. He seemed to be an intellectual who'd turned to movies instead of fiction. As Alexander Walker tells us in his valuable monograph, Kubrick while working as a journalist and tyro film-maker was compensating for his decision to forgo full-time higher education by monitoring courses at Columbia (the university not the studio) given by, among others, Lionel Trilling, Mark Van Doren and Moses Hadas. This is the background of the younger Jewish intellectuals of his day who became novelists, critics and magazine editors.

No surer sign of where he stood in the late 1950s can be found than in an essay by Dwight Macdonald, describing his belated first visit to Hollywood ('No Art and No Box Office', *Encounter*, July 1959). Needless to say Macdonald didn't like the movie colony, and mercifully sent up the cultural aspirations and affectations of everyone he met from Dore Schary to Jerry Wald. With a single excep-

tion: 'I spent an interesting three hours with Stanley Kubrick . . . discussing Whitehead, Kafka, *Potemkin*, Zen Buddhism, the decline of Western culture, and whether life is worth living anywhere except at the extremes—religious faith or the life of the senses; it was a typical New York conversation.'

At that point no doubt Kubrick was in danger of being assimilated into Hollywood, of becoming the Joe Mankiewicz of the new generation. But his dissatisfaction with his circumscribed role on *Spartacus* (the one picture he totally disowns) and, perhaps more crucially, his early departure from *One-Eyed Jacks*, strengthened his resolve to control his work in a radical fashion rather than adapt himself to the prevailing system. Since then he has made four long-gestating, deeply studied pictures in British exile: *Lolita*, *Dr. Strangelove*, 2001 and the forthcoming *A Clockwork Orange*. With *Strangelove* and 2001 Kubrick struck a receptive nerve at just the right time for critical and popular success. There's something about his pictures that has enabled him to combine the budgets of a DeMille with the quirky individuality of a Buñuel.

The dustjacket of Walker's book is somewhat misleading. First the title suggests that Kubrick is directing Alexander Walker, whereas the text reveals that he has merely co-operated closely with a great admirer. Secondly, there's a photograph of a coarsely bearded, intense young man which might lead the uninformed observer (an average citizen of Jupiter, perhaps) to infer that it was a portrait not of a movie director but of a theologian pondering the meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls or an anxious reform rabbi worrying about the correct form of service for his new Long Island synagogue. The design on the actual book, however, takes us right to the heart of the matter: a three-dimensional chess-board tapering off pyramid fashion to meet at some hazy infinity. This motif expresses perfectly Walker's view of Kubrick (and perhaps Kubrick's notion of himself) as a chess-master pursuing logical patterns until they transcend reason and enter a realm of madness, myth or magic.

Drawing on a close knowledge of the man and his work, Walker's book is an interim report on one of the most important post-war movie careers, and analyses the

way each of Kubrick's pictures is consciously built up from an initial concept to an achieved work through the discovery of an appropriate style. There's a general absence of woolly theorising; only where recurrent themes and preoccupations are manifest (e.g. the 'perfect' plan that goes wrong, the man v. machine/system situation, the oppression of time, the inexorability of fate, etc.) does Walker press them upon us. His discussions are closely related to the illustrations, mostly didactically arranged (and rather fuzzy) frame enlargements which serve to take the book off the coffee table and place it firmly on the study desk. Students will find *Stanley Kubrick Directs* of great value for the exact account of the relationship between Kubrick's mind and its cinematic expression that is provided in Walker's precise description of sequences, in Kubrick's statements about his work and in comments on the technical equipment he's used over the years.

My criticisms of the book are of a fairly minor order. I miss a chapter placing Kubrick in a larger social and historical context, and leading on from this I have a feeling that for all the claims the author quite rightly makes for his subject's uniqueness and individuality, he never quite confronts the bizarre, eccentric, obsessional quality in Kubrick's personality and art. Another reservation is that with a film-maker who has inspired such a diverse body of critical writing, a bibliography would have been useful. It is to be hoped that Walker will include one when he brings out a British edition or a revised version of the present American one to cover *A Clockwork Orange*.

PHILIP FRENCH

GARBO AND THE NIGHT WATCHMEN

Assembled and edited by
Alistair Cooke

SECKER AND WARBURG, £3.50

In the perspective of thirty years or more, a few films—a very few—are timeless, some are period, and some merely dated. Is it the same, one wonders, with film criticism; or is that to elevate the craft of criticism too far, hopefully, in the direction of art? Anyway, the re-issue of Alistair Cooke's classic anthology of 1937 gives us a chance to check on how, if at all, the film criticism of the 1930s stands up today. Timeless, period, or dated?

Of course it is all in a sense period. There is inevitably a whole nostalgia thing going for the book—especially as now admirably illustrated to remind us (could anyone forget?) how Kay Francis, Warner Oland and Elissa Landi looked. The overall image presented by the book is indeed rather reassuring. It is a bit reminiscent, at its most critical, of Orwell's *Coming Up for Air*, in that the writers are constantly inveighing against the horrors of

things as they are, as compared with how they used to be, while for us the horrors—I found *Stella Parish*, *Rose of the Rancho*, *The Scoundrel*, or in Orwell's case *Black and White* milk bars and vulgar supercinemas—have already acquired their own period charm, their status as a confident good from which we have since declined further into faceless nonentity.

But that sort of elementary camp is only part of the book's interest: just as well, since it would hardly be sufficient by itself to warrant a reissue. For some of the critics still remain very good indeed, and even those who have hardly stood the test of time are far from unreadable. It is easy, and obvious, to fall in love with Cecelia Ager, the lady who wrote for *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue* and reviewed everything, very properly, in terms of the leading lady's wardrobe.

Actually, this is not so frivolous a way of proceeding as it seems, since the star image and its presentation were after all central to Hollywood film-making and are therefore as correctly a subject of critical study as anything else. Also, the clothes and make-up do often stand rather well, in a quasi-symbolic fashion, for other elements in the films which Miss Ager apparently leaves untouched. The only review which really shows up the limitations of her approach is the required piece on *Modern Times*, which is given a section to itself at the end with the comments of all the critics concerned. *Modern Times*, whatever one may think of it, is a film one just cannot write about primarily in terms of Paulette Goddard and the style with which she carries her tatters.

If Cecelia Ager is period (nobody writes reviews like that any more, just as nobody makes films like most of those she reviews; and in both cases it seems rather a pity), Robert Forsythe (alias Kyle Crichton) is the most obviously dated of the critics. He is the Marxist of the bunch, and a Marxist of a particularly naïve, Thirtyish kind, judging every film in political blacks and whites. Sometimes the effect is decidedly ludicrous, as when John Cromwell's no doubt basely silly film version of Charles Morgan's loftily silly novel *The Fountain* is taken as the text for a swingeing attack on the British 'upper class'. Possibly he is right about both the British and the film, but the link-up is somehow defective. The film is evidently too slight a basis for the political judgments drawn from it, while to use all this anglophobia to savage the film seems very much like taking a sledgehammer to crack a peanut.

Some tics are common to all the critics. Reverence for Chaplin is almost though not quite universal; nearly everybody is against Hollywood (apart from Cecelia Ager), and tends to measure the success of an American film in terms of its deviation from what is seen as the Hollywood norm. All the

A Discovery of Cinema

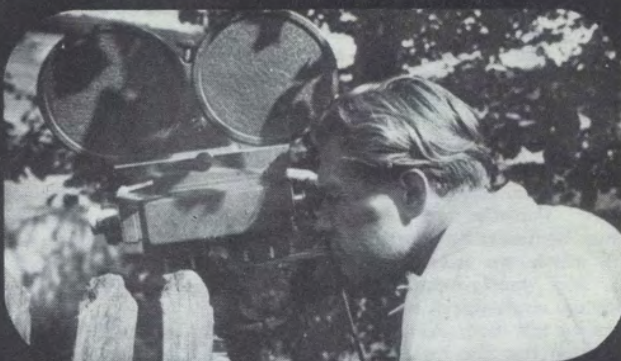
Thorold Dickinson

'It is the best brief account I have yet read of what movies are, where they are today and how they got there. He writes with a filmmaker's knowledge of nuts and bolts (or of emulsions and aspect ratios) and an inspired scholar's historical perspective, but also with plain common sense which is not necessarily common to either . . . Dickinson the author is at heart Dickinson the filmmaker, whose principal concern . . . is to give us his view of what, out of the peculiar historical mix of technology, world events and the legacy of genius, his fellow filmmakers have been enabled to do . . . "Attempts at money-making with moronic old formulae as a sole reference," Dickinson says, "can only effect certain death for cinema, because—as these ideas do not now make money—commerce will withdraw from film-making on any scale . . . The abiding problem is to reconcile the conformist needs of commerce with the assets which only the nonconformists can provide" . . . lucid and invaluable book . . . '—Charles Champlin in *The Los Angeles Times*

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critics, British and American, are far more outspoken than our libel lawyers would let us be today, at least in this country. Which of us would be permitted, with Meyer Levin, to 'single out with loathing such butter-faced boys as Richard Cromwell and Dickie Powell as among the weakest representations of manhood to be found on the screen'? The almost universal liberalism of the writers is unselfconsciously scattered with prejudices of race, religion and such (Robert Forsythe also flatly equates homosexuality with fascism) which we would be too mild and mealy-mouthed, or merely too circumspect, to express even if we felt them. Also, on the assumption that the reviews contained in this book are reprinted complete (those I have had occasion to check consistently, the Graham Greene ones, certainly are), critics in those days felt considerably less duty merely to inform their readers—on what the films were about, who directed them, and so on—than we do. Even when the judgment seems sound enough, the documentary evidence for it, and to enable us to read round it, is often lacking.

And how much of the book, if any, is timeless? It seems to me that the only critic contained in it whose angle of approach and style of writing would be quite unexceptional, and unexceptionable,

today is Robert Herring. Alistair Cooke too has his moments, particularly when appearing as a general observer rather than a critic of particular films: now and then one picks up with delight the sort of sharply phrased judgment on life or art which, as a broadcaster, he still regularly delivers. Then again there is Graham Greene, who is a special case. I think that he was a very good, though inevitably quirky, critic. Here he is represented by some of his good, but none of quite his best criticism. (That came just too late, mostly in *Night and Day*, every piece of which is marvellous.)

But by and large, it must be admitted, *Garbo and the Night Watchmen* is surprising in its staying power; owing no doubt quite a bit to Alistair Cooke's editorial flair. 1930s film criticism seems in its pages remarkably fresh and immediate—almost as much so as the films it concerned itself with. I wonder how an equivalent book showing off nine of us at our best now would look in 2005.

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

The Film Criticism of Otis Ferguson, edited by Robert Wilson (Temple University Press, Philadelphia, \$12.50). The collected

film reviews of Otis Ferguson, *New Republic* critic of the 1930s, killed in 1943 while serving in the U.S. merchant navy. Andrew Sarris, in a foreword, stakes a claim for Ferguson as 'the writer of the best and most subtly influential film criticism ever turned out in America,' disregarded by comparison with Agee because the latter 'was blessed with the kind of bookish credentials that enabled the trolls and Trillings of the literary establishment to hail him as the one and only compleat film critic.' Ferguson is one of the team in *Garbo and the Night Watchmen*, but stands out more as solo performer in this long (450-page) volume, an extended reminder of the energy, insights, off-hand humour, tough-mindedness and newspaper professionalism of star 1930s reviewing, when Hollywood was still the centre of the world. Ends with Ferguson's 1941 reportage on his trip to 'The Promissory Land' itself; and that ends with an appeal for a complete financial shake-up which would 'give the movies back to the people who make them.' Thirty years on...

Magic and Myth of the Movies, by Parker Tyler (Secker and Warburg, £2.95). First British edition of Parker Tyler's 1947 collection of articles, the book that obsessed Myra Breckinridge and the third

Tyler volume to be published here in the last few months. Erratic, stylistically cluttered, frequently rich mining of the loaded reef of American 1940s cinema, with the critic as lone prospector digging Freudian nuggets from *Arsenic and Old Lace* to *Mildred Pierce* by way of Betty Hutton. This edition opens with a new introduction in which Mr. Tyler refers (justly) to the 'baroque complication and casual obscurity' of his own style; mumbles somewhat about his Myra Breckinridge role; and notes with satisfaction that Penelope Gilliatt once referred to him in print as 'the American psychiatrist'.

The Tale of the Tales, by Rumer Godden (Warne, £4.00). Lavish, expensive, engaging piece of book-making, in the wake of all the Beatrix Potter enthusiasm disclosed or unleashed by the Ashton ballet film. Glowing, if factually somewhat frail, text by Rumer Godden about the team enterprise behind the movie, prettily supported by designer's sketches, colour stills, and reminders of the originals. Authentic Potter bonus at the end in the form of extracts from the correspondence of Jeremy Fisher, Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle and a disconsolately tailless Squirrel Nutkin ('I miss it very much. I would pay postage').

P. H.

worked on the Albert Ward films, but on larger productions like *The Game of Life* (1921-22)—directed by Samuelson himself—at least two cameramen were used.

General Film Renters ceased to handle Samuelson films after May 1921 because Samuelson suspended production at Worton Hall, where he was working on *The Game of Life*, and went into the transport business, until this venture was wound up early in 1922. In March 1922 he returned to Worton Hall, and formed a new company with Sir William Jury called 'British Super Films', releasing through Jury's Imperial Pictures. There can be no doubt that the 'unstable' financial position in which Samuelson found himself was largely due to the money he lost in the transport concern.

Dr. Low's attribution of the 'deplorable' *Land of Hope and Glory* (1927) to Samuelson is highly dubious. It was a 'Napoleon' film, but Samuelson left this company in 1925 (he had formed it with S. W. Smith in 1922). Advertisements of the film in trade journals of 1927 name Smith as the producer, and make no mention of Samuelson—a most unlikely omission if he had produced the film.

On the failure of Samuelson's company formed in 1926 to make *If Youth But Knew*, Dr. Low writes: 'Its failure was innocently attributed by Samuelson himself to "less successful production", expenses due to an accident...

But it is no use operating on a shoestring if you are prone to accidents.' The comment is (unwittingly, I am sure) uncharitable, since the 'accident' was a car accident resulting in personal injuries to Samuelson—something which could not possibly be foreseen and provided against.

Dr. Low's regret for Samuelson's 'preference for High Society' because 'few of his company looked the part' is hard to understand, since the company included Owen Nares, Isobel Elsom, Ruby Miller, Madge Titheradge, Daisy Burrell, Malcolm Cherry, Henry Vibart and Maudie Dunham, all with great experience in just this type of part.

She (1925) comes in for particularly damning criticism. Baynham Honri tells me that it was not one of Samuelson's best films. Even so, I would not say that Betty Blythe's performance was 'absurd over-acting', nor that the film is 'incredibly' slow. I think it can still be seen with some pleasure, among other things for the charm of Mary Odette, and the merit that it keeps strictly to Rider Haggard's story.

Samuelson of all people is difficult to evaluate because of the lack of film material. It may well be that his best work was done before or at the start of the period. It would be fascinating to see his *Milestones* (1916), very highly praised at the time; or his *The Elder Miss Blossom* (1918), which Desmond Dickinson tells me was a tremendous hit when British

films 'stank'. Film renters have told me that in the early days Samuelson's 'S' trademark was a guarantee of quality.

Dr. Low's necessarily academic approach tends to obscure the human side of the story. Certainly Samuelson became one of the smaller producers who were pushed to the wall as films became 'big business'. But surely the courage and resilience of these men deserves recognition. Samuelson's ability is attested by Desmond Dickinson, who worked with him on quota films in the early Thirties, and told me 'he could have directed anything'. Dallas Bower, who was his sound technician at the same period, testifies that he worked with amazing enthusiasm, speed and complete certainty and efficiency. But perhaps above all, those who worked with him recall with affection his simplicity, kindness and innocence of character. Indeed, they speak of him somewhat as American pioneers talk of Griffith. He seems to have inspired their love, and this is surely not a bad 'final verdict' on Samuelson.

Yours faithfully,

HAROLD DUNHAM

Enfield, Middlesex.

Twenty-Four Times a Second

SIR,—I wonder if I might be permitted to take the occasion of Mr. Perez-Guillermo's generous review of my book to call attention to an important typographical error in it which relates to some of the issues the review raises. On

Letters

British Film History

SIR,—In her *History of the British Film 1918-1929*, Dr. Rachael Low confirms the difficulty in assessing the merits of films when so many are just not available to see; but she appears to fall somewhat into this trap at times. She describes J. Stuart Blackton's films of the early 1920s as 'monumentally dull'—a judgment probably based on a viewing of *The Glorious Adventure*. I have seen the final sequences of Blackton's *A Gypsy Cavalier* (1922) and—admittedly after a slow start—they build to a most suspenseful climax, with Flora le Breton coming within inches of drowning in a coach stuck in the middle of a raging torrent.

Pioneer producer G. B. Samuelson comes off particularly badly. One or two minor additions can be made to Dr. Low's account. Besides Rex (not Frank) Wilson and Albert Ward, Samuelson had as directors during the period Alexander Butler, Fred Durrant, Fred Paul and Walter Summers; and in addition to Sydney Blythe he had cameramen James Rogers and Alf Tunwell. Rogers usually

page 39, what now reads, 'I believe that when a first-rate film criticism comes to be written (as the work of Robert Warshaw decisively shows) it will be based not on a cultivated technical sophistication, but on the incorporation of such special knowledge within the basic framework of a first-rate criticism of any of the arts,' should read: '... the incorporation of such special knowledge within the basic framework of a first-rate intelligence; not different, in short, from a first-rate criticism of any of the arts.' The point seems to me all the more worth insisting on in view of things like Philip French's admiring quotation of such gibberish as Manny Farber on 'negative space'. Though I would think here was a case where one might not need to invoke models of sense (and syntax) from art criticism, given discussions of the use of space in films as intelligent as those by Mr. Perez-Guillermo, writing on Murnau in *SIGHT AND SOUND* and elsewhere.

Yours faithfully,
WILLIAM S. PECHTER
San Francisco.

Deep End

SIR,—Is there really no way in which film-makers can protect themselves against the misguided attempts of distributors and cinema

managers to draw the crowds by cheapening and falsifying the content and quality of their films? This is a perennial complaint, I know, and we all treasure our favourite examples of title changes and lurid publicity. The instance which specifically prompted this letter was the doubtful tribute paid to Jerzy Skolimowski's *Deep End* of being 'the naughty film of the year'. That is the way this excellent film was advertised by the Cinephone, Manchester.

The trouble with this kind of advertising is that it misleads all the public, whatever sort of film they're looking for; the person who would appreciate and enjoy a well-made and intelligent film might be put off from seeing it, while the skin-flick addict will see it and presumably be bitterly disappointed. Moreover, publicity of this kind, which is reserved mainly for continental films, probably helps to confirm the conviction, still held by some people, that the continental cinema is synonymous with 'all those sex films'.

The same Manchester cinema, incidentally, had for its next presentation Claude Chabrol's *Les Biches*. Fine. But coupled with it was something entitled *The Sinning Urge*.

Yours faithfully,
C. MCCURRY
Stockport, Cheshire.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

JAMES PAUL GAY is an American film-maker and critic at present working in Stockholm; has written and directed three films, and is currently writing a feature script and also working on a short to be shown in Swedish schools... TED GILLING is a Canadian who has lived in London since 1964. Was formerly production columnist for *Today's Cinema*, and has worked as publicist on a number of films, including *The Lion in Winter*, *The Music Lovers*, and Joseph Janni's new production *Made*. He has written two film scripts and is researching a third... DEREK HILL

runs the New Cinema Club; was formerly a film critic (*Tribune*, etc), and originated the Short Film Service... GEORGE C. STONEY is director of the Alternate Media Center at New York University. Documentary director (*All My Babies*, etc.) and until recently executive producer for the National Film Board of Canada's Challenge for Change programme... BEVERLY WALKER has recently been acting as press representative for the Los Angeles International Film Exposition... COLIN YOUNG is director of Britain's new National Film School, and was previously professor of UCLA's department of Theatre Arts.

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MGM-EMI for *Family Life*.
20th CENTURY-FOX for *Walkabout, The Egyptian*.
UNITED ARTISTS for *The Bat Whispers*.
RKO-RADIO PICTURES for *Citizen Kane, On Dangerous Ground*.
CINERAMA for *Kotch, Straw Dogs*.
RANK FILM DISTRIBUTION for *Fahrenheit 451*.
RANK/UNIVERSAL PICTURES for *The Hired Hand*.
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VAUGHAN FILMS for *Trash, The Moon and the Sledgehammer*.
PLANET FILM DISTRIBUTORS for *La Voie Lactée*.
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ATLANTIC PRODUCTIONS/KOSUTN/JACK FILMSKI YUGOSLAVIA for *England Made Me*.
ICAIC for *Days of Water*.
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PETER DE ROME for *Fire Island Kids*.
NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA for *Challenge for Change*.
NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE for *Twentieth Century, Citizen Kane* (still of Xanadu taken from the frame by J. J. McCloskey.)

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AUSTRALIA: Charles Higham
SCANDINAVIA: Ib Monty
SPAIN: Francisco Aranda
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FILM GUIDE

ANDERSON TAPES, THE (Columbia-Warner)

The criminal as victim of the electronics age in a downbeat thriller about a grandiose scheme to rob a New York apartment block. The crooks are all bugged; but the only one not tuned in is Sidney Lumet, whose moody, fragmented direction muffles the tension and undercuts the theme of privacy made public. (Sean Connery, Martin Balsam, Ralph Meeker.)

BLOOMFIELD (Fox)

Richard Harris, this time as actor and director, returns to the football field as a tired player stuck with an arty mistress (Romy Schneider) and a young boy admirer. Some sensitive scenes buried beneath frenetic direction, taking in everything from Lelouch slow motion to bizarre Wellesian under-the-table shots.

CLOCKWORK ORANGE, A (Columbia-Warner)

Kubrick's ingenious, inventive, exuberant adaptation of Anthony Burgess' barely futuristic fantasy about teenage violence and the dire effects of punishment aversion therapy. Should put tolchoked and horrorshow into the language. (Malcolm McDowell.) Reviewed.

CONFORMIST, THE (Curzon)

Bertolucci's crystalline dissection of the anatomy of conformity, brilliantly evocative of the spider's web intrigue of pre-war Fascist Italy. A superbly realised demonstration of private guilt as the mainspring of public acquiescence. (Jean-Louis Trintignant, Dominique Sanda.)

DOC (United Artists)

Apart from the opening scene and Stacy Keach's performance as Doc Holliday, little feeling for the Western in this half-hearted attempt to retell the Gunfight at the O.K. Corral from the viewpoint that Wyatt Earp was a double-dyed villain. The various attempts at significance are rather embarrassing. (Faye Dunaway, Harris Yulin; director, Frank Perry.)

DRIVE, HE SAID (Columbia-Warner)

Restrained and disturbing first feature from Jack Nicholson, charting the painful steps towards self-consciousness of an extrovert basketball player reluctant to choose between athletics and eccentricity. Karen Black superb as a professor's wife indulging in a guilty affair, and the film gains by not spelling out its levels of allegory. (William Tepper, Michael Margotta.)

FAMILY LIFE (MGM-EMI)

Ken Loach's adaptation of David Mercer's television play about the making of a schizophrenic. Laingian in its concept of environment as the cause of mental illness; and depressingly convincing, despite some doubts about special pleading. (Sandy Ratcliff, Bill Dean, Grace Cave.) Reviewed.

FORTUNE AND MEN'S EYES (MGM-EMI)

Handsome teenager, jailed for a drug offence, becomes an object of interest and assault to hungry homosexuals and sex-starved inmates. Well acted, neatly adapted from John Herbert's play, but

falling between the two stools of sensational exposé and serious protest about prison conditions. (Wendell Burton, Michael Greer, Zoëy Hall; director, Harvey Hart.)

GRISSOM GANG, THE (Cinerama)

Robert Aldrich's slick version of *No Orchids for Miss Blandish*, about the Depression era kidnapping of a Kansas City socialite. Distant and unflattering echoes of *Bloody Mama* in a fashionable blend of camp, violence and synthetic nostalgia. (Kim Darby, Scott Wilson, Tony Musante.)

GUMSHOE (Columbia-Warner)

Sympathetic first feature, witty and nostalgic, from young British director Stephen Frears. Albert Finney plays a Bogart-fixed North-country bingo-caller whose private eye fantasies of guns and gangsters unexpectedly materialise and follow him all the way to the Labour Exchange. (Billie Whitelaw, Janice Rule.) Reviewed.

HANNIE CAULDER (Tigon)

Camped-up revenge Western which makes a half-hearted attempt to revive the 'clad-only' genre, with Raquel Welch wrapping a blanket around her and setting out to hunt down the trio of baddies who've shot her husband and treated her to a tastelessly slapstick gang-bang. (Robert Culp, Ernest Borgnine.)

HELLSTROM CHRONICLE, THE (Fox)

Engrossing close-up view of the insect world, superbly photographed and packed with alarming facts and figures. Marred by a buttonholing commentary and an ubiquitous entomologist, as though the pictures weren't enough to persuade us that the insects have a better chance than we do. (Director, Walon Green.)

HIRED HAND, THE (Rank)

Peter Fonda's indulgent first feature (all arty superimpositions and charismatic profiles) about a saddle-sore Ulysses briefly reconciled with his understandably unfaithful wife and eventually martyred for preferring male loyalties to family life. (Peter Fonda, Warren Oates, Verna Bloom.) Reviewed.

LAST RUN, THE (MGM-EMI)

Sven Nykvist's superb photography and George C. Scott's impeccable performance as a retired getaway driver making a last-ditch stand against his own obsolescence amply compensate for Alan Sharp's tiresomely explicit script. Richard Fleischer directs the action sequences with more conviction than he does the significant speeches. (Tony Musante, Trish Van Devere.)

LIONS LOVE (Contemporary)

Agnès Varda meets the Hollywood drop-outs. The authors of *Hair* and superstar Viva take Shirley Clarke into their luxury apartment, and everybody talks and talks while Miss Clarke tries to set up a movie about the place. Irritating display of prettified exhibitionism. (Jim Rado, Jerome Gagni.)

MARRIAGE OF A YOUNG STOCKBROKER, THE (Fox)

Produced by Lawrence Turman (*The Graduate*), from a novel by Charles Webb (*The Graduate*), and trying—surprise, surprise—to be *Son of The Graduate*. Richard Benjamin funny throughout, but the theme (dropping out of the stock exchange to rediscover the real values) is hit with the delicacy of a sledgehammer. (Joanna Shimkus, Elizabeth Ashley; director, Lawrence Turman.)

NEW LEAF, A (Paramount)

Walter Matthau in splendid form as a pampered playboy forced to marry wealth in order to keep himself in the style to which he is accustomed. Elaine May almost as good as the absentmindedly frumpish botanist whom he never quite manages to murder and who finally turns him into a reluctant St.

Bernard. Her direction, though, is erratic. (George Rose, Jack Weston.) Reviewed.

NICHOLAS AND ALEXANDRA (Columbia-Warner)

The fall of the House of Romanov, meticulously documented in Sam Spiegel's intimate epic as a family affair revolving round the weakling Tsarevich. A long slog through scattered pages of history, painstakingly marshalled by Franklin Schaffner, who disappointingly keeps his distance. (Michael Jayston, Janet Suzman.) Reviewed.

PLEASE SIR! (Rank)

Another television comedy series expanded for the big screen, this one about London secondary school kids let loose on a country holiday camp. Mischief ensues, predictably and at length; no marks for comic invention. (John Alderton, Deryck Guyler; director, Mark Stuart.)

PRETTY MAIDS ALL IN A ROW (MGM-EMI)

Vadim in Hollywood with a high school comedy thriller which misfires on all cylinders. An unhappy mélange of sex, satire and snigger; marginal relief from Rock Hudson, Angie Dickinson and Keenan Wynn, who play the game with more spirit than it deserves.

RED BARON, THE (United Artists)

Roger Corman's accomplished, characteristically idiosyncratic but uneven look at aerial combat in the Great War, centred on the conflict between honour and expediency in the personalities of doomed aristocrat von Richthofen and Canadian farmer Brown. Superb aerial sequences; less sure on the ground. (John Phillip Law, Don Stroud.)

RED SKY AT MORNING (Rank)

Set in 1944 and mainly about the problems of adolescence, but with odd injections of patriotism (Daddy is off to war), Tennessee Williams (Mummy, played by Claire Bloom, is a budding Blanche Dubois), *Rebel Without a Cause*, and much preachment about racial tolerance. There are moments. (Richard Thomas, Catherine Burns, Richard Crenna; director, James Goldstone.)

SECRETS (Satori)

A day in the life of a young London family and their various encounters with strangers who leave them sadder but wiser. Glossy, enervatingly complacent slice of magazine romance; and as the first Super-16 feature it would hardly pass an hour on television. (Jacqueline Bisset, Per Oscarsson, Shirley Knight Hopkins; director, Philip Saville.)

SEVEN MINUTES, THE (Fox)

Russ Meyer's latest two-faced look at America's two-faced morality, happily exploiting the sex, violence and chauvinism it purports to denounce. If you're prepared to make a virtue of vulgarity, it's worth watching for skilful type-casting and for Yvonne De Carlo's old-style Hollywood performance as an old-style Hollywood star. (Wayne Maunders, Marianne McAndrew, Edy Williams.)

SHAFT (MGM-EMI)

Straightforward but stylishly enjoyable private eye thriller, with new wine put into old bottles by a black director, black cast, and Harlem locations. As engagingly untroubled by black panthers or liberal watchdogs as *Cotton Comes to Harlem*, but with a much stronger narrative sense. Richard Roundtree outstandingly good in the Bogart part. (Moses Gunn, Christopher St. John; director, Gordon Parks.)

SOIR... UN TRAIN, UN (Fox)

Intiguing but flawed essay in time and memory from the director of

The Man Who Had His Hair Cut Short, about a smug Flemish professor whose encounters in a hallucinatory wasteland of the mind reveal intimations of mortality for himself and the lover he has neglected. An allusive, opaque centre crushed by layers of transparent symbolism. (Yves Montand, Anouk Aimée; director, André Delvaux.)

STRAW DOGS (Cinerama)

Horror in a Cornish village when an American academic and his English wife find themselves inextricably involved in a spiral of violence. Sam Peckinpah meticulously sets the scene, though some may find his apocalyptic denouement hard to swallow. (Dustin Hoffman, Susan George.) Reviewed.

TRAFFIC (Columbia-Warner)

The further adventures of Tati's M. Hulot, this time on his way to deliver a gadget-stuffed car to an auto show. Sporadically funny, but Hulot disappointingly takes a back seat, the other passengers are no match for him, and there's a lot of slack en route. (Jacques Tati, Maria Kimberley.) Reviewed.

TWO LANE BLACKTOP (Rank)

... or Two Chassis in Search of an Engine. Director Monte Hellman charts the endless wanderings of a pair of hot-rodgers drag-racing across the U.S. Strong on small town atmospherics and American psychoses, but ultimately flawed by its over-knowing allegorising. (James Taylor, Dennis Wilson, Laurie Bird.) Reviewed.

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN? (United Artists)

Lively Grand Guignol set in a meticulously realised 1930s America. Curtis Harrington borrows liberally from everyone but keeps the creepy atmosphere going and gets brilliantly detailed performances, notably from a completely revitalised Debbie Reynolds. (Shelley Winters, Micheál Mac-Liammoir.) Reviewed.

WHERE'S POPPA? (United Artists)

Brilliant black comedy about a young lawyer (George Segal) who wants a normal sex life (with the delectable Trish Van Devere) but is saddled with an outsize Jewish mother complex which means that if he even talks about sending his old lady (Ruth Gordon at her battiest) to an old people's home, he is practically castrated. (Ron Leibman, director; Carl Reiner.)

WILLY WONKA AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY (Paramount)

Agreeable entertainment for children, scripted by Roald Dahl from one of his novels and, apart from a few rather sickly songs, remarkably faithful to it. There are some superb, edible sci-fi sets, and Gene Wilder is faultless as the cranky inventor of the Everlasting Gobstopper. (Jack Albertson, Peter Ostrum; director, Mel Stuart.)

WR—MYSTERIES OF THE ORGANISM (Academy/Connoisseur)

Makavejev's extraordinary collage of sex and revolution, part based on, part applying the iconoclastic theories of Wilhelm Reich. By turns erotic and bitingly funny as it slaughters yesterday's sacred cows and sounds the alarms for tomorrow's brave new world. (Milena Dravic, Jagoda Kaloper.)

WUSA (Paramount)

Miscalculated attempt at incisive satire of America's right-wing backlash and media manipulation, tidily dividing its characters between the sensitive (Joanne Woodward at her most Methodist and Anthony Perkins at his most psychotic) and the survivors (Paul Newman and Laurence Harvey), and numbing the spectator with its own brand of overkill. (Director, Stuart Rosenberg.) Reviewed.



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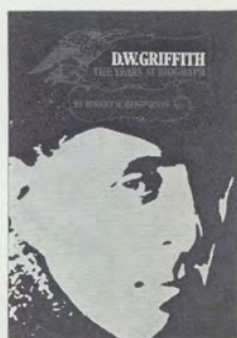
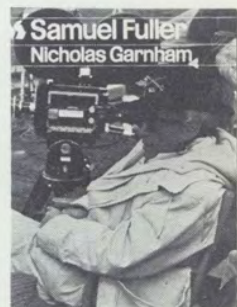
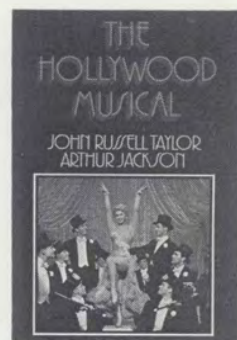
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